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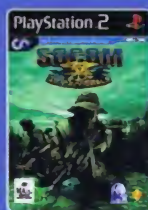
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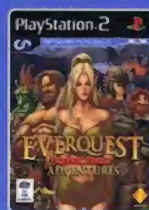
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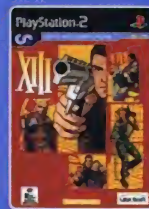
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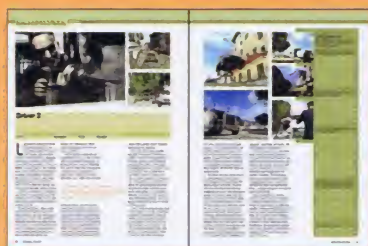


ENTERTAINMENT



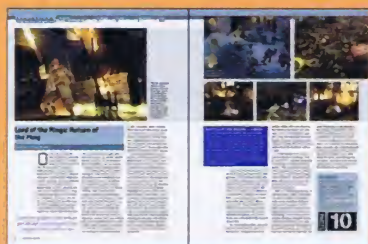
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The biggest battle of the millennium. Xbox Live vs PS2 Network. The gloves are off, the first punch has been thrown but who will come out on top?



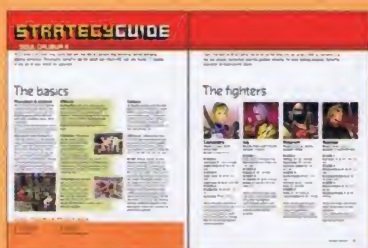
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AUSTRALIAN GAMEPRO

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Welcome

Welcome to the first
issue of Australian
GamePro! Some of
you may be familiar

with our US 'parent' magazine, which
has been around for over a decade and
has a readership of over 3 million people
every issue. We'll be using the best of the
American content, such as their exclusive
developer interviews and hands-on looks
at upcoming titles, but the vast majority
of Australian GamePro will be locally
produced – including all of our reviews.
This is important not just because game
release dates in the US and Australia are
often quite separate, but because there
are cultural and seasonal differences
between our two countries. While games
are obviously our main focus, we'll also
be keeping you up-to-date with the
world of music, film and DVD. To stay
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Stuart Clarke

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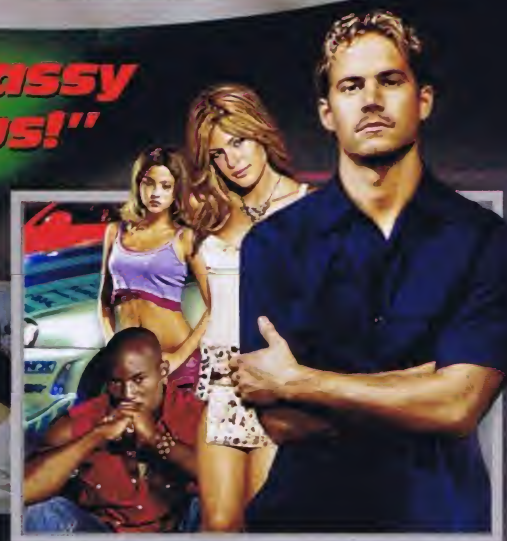
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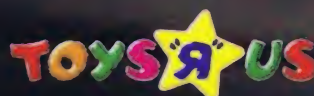
- Heat



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DAVID JONES



Harvey Norman



Sony's brand new toys

PSX

The line that separates the gaming industry from the rest of the entertainment industry is fading into obscurity quicker than Speedy Gonzales at a cat convention. Sony has announced plans to release the PSX, a multimedia system that combines a satellite TV tuner and DVD Recorder

with their PS2 gaming system. If that isn't enough to blow your mind, it will also ship with a 160 GB or 250GB hard drive that can store more than 204 hours of television. No more VHS tapes cluttering shelves then? However, such a product comes at a hefty price and early reports suggest an outlay of up to 79,800 Yen (AU\$1,050) for the 160 GB or 99,800 (AU\$1,300) Yen for the 250GB. Better start saving.

PSP

At the PlayStation Meeting 2003 conference held in Tokyo, Sony President Ken Kutaragi announced more details on the PSP (PlayStation Portable), which was announced at this year's E3. The PSP's CPU is a MIPS R4000 processor – basically the same type used in the original PlayStation but running about 10 times faster at 333 MHz. There are two 32-bit cores within this processor: One, the 'main' core used for games, holds 8 MB of DRAM memory, a floating-point unit, and a Vector Engine similar in concept to the PS2's internal design. The other core, which has 2 MB of RAM built in and doesn't feature the extra FPU and vector unit, is used for playing movies and music on the PSP system.

Although Kutaragi didn't reveal the PSP's external design, he confirmed that the system will have the standard circle-square-triangle-X button arrangement (now a trademark of the PlayStation line) as well as a control pad, analog stick, and L1, R1, Select, and Start buttons. The biggest surprise was the announcement that the system will come with IEEE 802.11-based wireless LAN technology as a standard feature. Apparently originally planned as an optional extra, Kutaragi said that Sony is now including it standard in the PSP due to requests from developers and the spread of hotspots and other wireless networking technology. The system can also connect to PSPs, PCs, and other appliances via IrDA infrared technology or through a USB 2.0 connection cable.

Kutaragi said that a prototype of the PSP will be shown at E3 in May 2004 and that the company is still planning for a holiday 2004 launch. More details as they emerge...

Gaming Oz style

On the 20th-23rd of November the annual Australian Game Developers Conference will take place at the Melbourne Convention Centre and it marks an unrivalled opportunity to mix with the cream of local and international talent. Australian game development has been growing in both quantity and quality over the past few years and the 'Paid to Play' Careers Market will provide an excellent opportunity for gamers to get their foot into the industry. The showpiece is Australia's first Electronic Game Academic Summit, 'Playing with our Minds', which will examine video game theory, essential ingredients in game education and explore the impact of interactive technology.

International speakers include: Ian Livingstone – Creative Director, Eidos; Phil Harrison – Senior VP Development, Sony; Laura Fryer – Director, Xbox; Seamus Blackley – VP Development, Capital Entertainment Group; Ian Fischer, Lead Game Designer, Ensemble Studios. For more information visit www.agdc.com.au

Wireless GBA

At the recent Tokyo Game Show, Nintendo President Satoru Iwata announced plans to release a wireless device to allow GBA owners to play against each other without cables. The wireless module will appear bundled with copies of Pokemon Leaf Green and Pokemon Fire Red and will retail for around 4,800 Yen (AU\$65.00). GBA owners who aren't Pokemaniacs need to worry however, as Nintendo's future releases will also make use of this feature. Similar to Bluetooth technology, the chip that will power the GBA Wireless is designed by Motorola and Iwata promises that the connection will work over several meters.

GRAND THEFT INNOCENCE?

Gamers all across the world have enjoyed the magic gameplay of the Grand Theft Auto series, but is it truly designed to "inspire and train players to shoot at vehicles and persons"? That's what lawyers in Tennessee, USA are claiming as they sue the designers (Take-Two and Rockstar Games), marketer (Sony) and retailer (Wal-Mart) of GTA for a total of US\$246 million (AU\$349m). On June 25th, Aaron Hamel (45) was shot dead and Kimberly Bede (19) seriously injured when step-brothers William (16) and Joshua Buckner (14) shot their cars with a .22 rifle as they drove through the Great Smokey Mountains. Their favourite game, one GTA: Vice City.

This is not the first time that entertainment has been blamed for violent acts - the Columbine high school massacre was blamed on Marilyn Manson and Doom. Jack Thompson (the lawyer filing the case) has tried similar lawsuits previously, including a 1997 'request' for US\$33m from the video game industry. He lost. At the time, the judges ruled that it was "simply too far a leap from shooting characters on a computer screen to shooting people in a classroom". Obviously Thompson hasn't learnt from his mistake and if he had done his homework and held off a couple of weeks, the Xbox version of GTA would have been released and he could have added Microsoft and \$100m to his shopping list.

GamePro's verdict: Forget the game, how did two kids get a gun?

NEW NINTENDO CONSOLE IN 2004?

Nintendo President Satoru Iwata has made some vague but intriguing remarks about a plan to make a major product announcement next autumn but offered no specifics. "We are preparing a new product that will give a fresh surprise to consumers," Iwata said, but he would not offer details due to concerns about competitors. There is no indication as to whether the product is hardware, software, or peripheral, but the comment has raised some speculation about a console to replace the ailing GameCube. Nintendo reported that it had sold only 80,000 GameCube consoles worldwide in the first fiscal quarter 2003. Could this mean the GameCube 2 is around the corner? Perhaps, but we'll have to wait a few months for the answer.



ATI TO POWER XBOX 2

Nvidia must pass the graphics-chip torch to rival ATI for Microsoft's next console

The makers of those high-caliber Radeon 3D cards powering so many gamers' PCs will also drive the next Xbox. ATI recently announced that it has struck a deal with Microsoft to "develop custom, leading-edge graphics technologies for use in future Xbox products and services." In other words, ATI will craft the graphics technology to be used for the Xbox 2 (or NextBox, or whatever it's going to be called), stealing away another piece of the 3D graphics market from Nvidia. Nvidia makes the custom graphics chips for the current generation of Xbox hardware as well as the recently introduced FX line of PC video cards.

The loss of Microsoft's console business is far from a death blow for Nvidia by any means. A spokesman for Nvidia hinted that the company wasn't necessarily all that interested in working with Microsoft again, at least on another home console venture, for any number of business reasons; the company was recently involved in a highly publicized dispute over chip costs that had Nvidia producing hardware at a loss. (For more details regarding the Nvidia/Microsoft Xbox alliance, read Dean Takahashi's enlightening book *Opening the Xbox*.)

ATI currently provides custom hardware for Nintendo's GameCube. An ATI spokesman said that their deal with Microsoft won't affect that in any way. ATI won't necessarily reap the benefits of its new deal until the end of 2005, when it's predicted the current console cycle will end and new hardware will be introduced.

DISENGAGED

Only a couple of weeks after its launch, the Nokia N-Gage smashed through sales records of a negative kind – as possibly the worst selling games system launch in history. Or so independent reports would suggest. In its first 2 weeks, the N-Gage reputedly sold a measly 5,000 units in America which, considering its population of 300 million is poor to say the least. Sales have fared even worse in the UK, with reports of only 500 units making it off the shelves, which appears even bleaker than their infamous weather. However, Nokia claim that 400,000 units shipped during this period, so the jury is definitely still out on that one.



14 Year Old Girls Make Cool Game Punk Tunes

You've heard songs about love, society, cars, and various parts of the anatomy – but where are the songs about video games (except, you know, 'Pac-Man Fever')? With songs entitled 'Castlevania Punk,' and 'Rayden on Prom Night,' 14 Year Old Girls are the real deal. What *Zombies In Robots Out* lacks in length (most of the 16 songs last 90 seconds or less) and polish (think lo-fi Devo synth-punk), it makes up for in sheer street cred and gamer-geek flag-waving. The song 'Tomb Raider U.K. Pop' – with lyrics like "Tomb Raider / your poly count is bad / Tomb Raider / your level design is awful" – is worth the low price of admission all by itself. *Zombies In Robots Out* is strange, done on a low budget, and not for everyone – in other words, true punk. Worth hunting down.

Become a local hero...at the expense of your mates.

Race your Enzo Ferrari around the streets of Sydney in *Project Gotham Racing 2*. Shred the slopes of Mount Buller in *Amped 2*. Wipe your opponents off the court like only Lleyton Hewitt can in *Top Spin*. With over 230 games now available on Xbox, these three provide a blend of mind blowing game play and exhilarating Australian flavour. Experience what it feels like to defeat your friends on home turf.



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Chris Boadle going to the bar the hard way

AUSSIE MOUNTAIN STARS IN AMPED 2

When Microsoft decided to include an Australian mountain in its sequel to Amped, Australia's top freestyle snowboarder, Chris Boadle, became an instrumental part of its design. A local on the slopes of Mt. Buller, Chris and fellow boarder Shane Carter have made sure that the nuances, slopes and environment of their favourite mountain have been accurately reproduced in the virtual world.

Australia might not be known for its world class slopes, but Buller more than holds its own against the higher profile resorts found in Amped 2. And it's no wonder, as Chris and Shane's inside knowledge is beyond peer, making Buller instantly familiar to those who've visited the Victorian resort – complete with accurate lift positioning, recognizable runs and identifiable buildings.

Chris and Shane added further flavour to the local atmosphere by lending their vocal talents to the game. Take a big stack while doing a rail or busting a huge air and the Aussie accented put-down no doubt emanated from the lungs of these men. Speaking of big crashes, Chris put his body on the line by performing much of the stunt work seen in Amped 2. "It was hard work. They cover you in these sensors in order to simulate the way your body moves during impact. To do this they put you on a trolley that's tied to a couple of ropes. Then a couple of guys pull you as fast as they can into a wall."

Sounds tough, but that isn't the half of it. "The worst was doing the video capturing for copping a hit in the jatz crackers. They had this pole covered in foam and I had to just drop on top of it." Ouch! It may not seem like exhilarating work, but thanks to Chris and Shane, Australia have staked a claim in one of the biggest games of summer which, considering the last snow has long faded, is perfect timing.

WHAT'S HOT?

GAME CHARTS

ALL PLATFORMS

- 1 EyeToy: Play (PS2)
- 2 Rugby 2004 (PS2)
- 3 GTA: Vice City (PS2)
- 4 Tiger Woods PGA 2004 (PS2)
- 5 C&C Generals: Zero Hour (PC)
- 6 Medal of Honor: Frontline (PS2)
- 7 Conflict Desert Storm 2 (PS2)
- 8 Knights of the Old Republic (Xbox)
- 9 Finding Nemo (PS2)
- 10 SOCOM: US Navy SEALs (PS2)

GBA

- 1 Pokemon Ruby
- 2 Final Fantasy Tactics
- 3 Finding Nemo
- 4 Pokemon Sapphire
- 5 Dragonball Z: Goku Legacy 2
- 6 YuGiOh World Wide
- 7 Donkey King Country
- 8 Pirates of the Caribbean
- 9 Mario Kart Super Circuit
- 10 Bionicle

PS2

- 1 EyeToy: Play
- 2 Rugby 2004
- 3 GTA: Vice City
- 4 Tiger Woods PGA 2004
- 5 Medal of Honor: Frontline
- 6 Conflict Desert Storm 2 Baghdad
- 7 Finding Nemo
- 8 SOCOM: US Navy SEALs
- 9 Grand Theft Auto 3
- 10 YuGiOh Duelist of Roses

GAMECUBE

- 1 Soul Calibur II
- 2 WWE WrestleMania X9
- 3 Finding Nemo
- 4 Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker
- 5 The Sims
- 6 Metroid Prime
- 7 Sonic Adventure DX
- 8 Need for Speed Hot Pursuit 2
- 9 Wario World
- 10 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell

XBOX

- 1 Knights of the Old Republic
- 2 Xbox Live Shooter Pack
- 3 WWE Raw is War
- 4 Conflict Desert Storm 2: Baghdad
- 5 Halo
- 6 Colin McRae Rally 4
- 7 Soul Calibur 2
- 8 Medal of Honor: Frontline
- 9 Finding Nemo
- 10 Tiger Woods PGA 2004

PC

- 1 C&C Generals Zero Hour
- 2 Jedi Knight 2: Jedi Outcast
- 3 The Sims Deluxe
- 4 The Sims Superstar
- 5 Nemo Underwater World Fun
- 6 Finding Nemo
- 7 D&D Temple of Elemental Evil
- 8 Battlefield 1942 Reload
- 9 WarCraft III Frozen Throne
- 10 Medal of Honor Allied Assault



GEEK SPEAK

Q What is bump-mapping?

A Bump mapping is a way to make an object in a game look like it's bumpy without actually creating all those bumps out of polygons. More polygons in a game object means slower performance

because it's more stuff for the computer to draw. Bump mapping is a trick to get something to look like it's super-detailed without doing all the detail work.

Think of it this way: You have a polygon – it's flat, like a blank wall in your house. It's boring and blank, so you put a texture on it. You could paint it a solid color, but you choose wallpaper with duckies on it because that's more interesting. But it's still flat. So you upgrade your wallpaper with a fancy-looking 3D duck on it, and when you look at it across the room, it looks like the wall has halves of rubber duckies physically glued on it. The light in the room has something to do with that as does the shading around the duck. When you go over and touch it... nope... it's just wallpaper, and it's smooth to the touch. It's still flat. But it doesn't look flat, so mission accomplished. The only downside is that those duckies keep watching you, and their eyes follow you around the room. Man, that's disturbing.

But that part where the wall looks like it has ducks of spatial depth, but it's really just a trick of the light? That's bump mapping. It's used on game objects like rocks, lizard skin, asphalt, scratched metal, or anything else that the artists want to look more tactile than it actually is.

Become a local hero...at the expense of your mates.



Race your Enzo Ferrari around the streets of Sydney in Project Gotham Racing 2. Shred the slopes of Mount Buller in Amped 2. Wipe your opponents off the court like only Lleyton Hewitt can in Top Spin. With over 230 games now available on Xbox, these three provide a blend of mind blowing game play and exhilarating Australian flavour. Experience what it feels like to defeat your friends on home turf.



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View from the Hill

Veteran games journalist Jason Hill salutes the Aussie game buying public



To the chagrin of most hardcore gamers, Australian best seller lists of recent years are dominated by sequels and licensed games.

Everybody bemoans a perceived lack of innovation in today's market, but the criticism is not reflected in game sales. In fact, the opposite is true.

Obviously there are too many indistinguishable racing games, action adventures and first-person-shooter clones weighing down store shelves, but you can hardly blame publishers for following trends and trying to make money. Despite critical acclaim, too often innovative games like *Ico*, *Animal Crossing*, *Amplitude*, *PaRappa*, *Jet Set Radio*, *Super Monkey Ball* and *Viewtiful Joe* sell precious few copies. Meanwhile, titles like *Enter the Matrix* shift millions almost on the strength of their license alone.

Full credit must go to all 40,783 of you who have bought Sony's fabulous EyeToy so far. Its success in Australia and around the world (over half a million sold in Europe alone) has surprised everyone in the industry, even Sony who has suffered stock shortages. EyeToy's success will have big implications.

Already the industry is wondering what will be "the next EyeToy". Although it's hardly revolutionary, Microsoft's karaoke-singing Music

Mixer is one of the leading candidates. After several years of lean profits and risk-adverse game development, EyeToy just might encourage more publishers to green-light projects that attempt to offer something different.

EyeToy's beauty is that anyone can play. It is five minutes entertainment at best when alone, but invite some mates over and you'll die laughing. There have been party games equally as entertaining, but never one so inclusive that absolutely anyone can play. Here's hoping that EyeToy encourages far more innovation and originality in our favourite past-time. And just as importantly, let us hope it also encourages people of all ages to try picking up a joypad instead of just dancing like a gibbon or washing countless windows.

Jason Hill is one of Australia's most respected video games journalists. He has reviewed thousands of games across all formats for over a decade.

You can hardly blame publishers for following trends and trying to make money



BEHIND THE EYETOY

The PS2's EyeToy camera has proved one of the biggest gaming successes of 2003. Ron Festejo from Sony Computer Entertainment Europe is the developer of EyeToy: Play and the new EyeToy: Groove

What first interested you in developing for EyeToy?

RF: It was a very early demo that got me interested in the technology. At the time, it didn't have the EyeToy name. I remember the audience gasping at what was shown and from that point I knew it was something that I wanted to do.

In developing titles for EyeToy, what are the important technical considerations?

RF: There aren't any technical considerations, as such. More design issues. We had to go back to basic game design when trying to come up with games. I hired my designer, Craig Kerrison, because of his experience with simple games for interactive TV. We had to approach design from a different angle. We wanted to make them simple for anyone to understand, yet try to keep some depth in there to keep the core gamers happy, and I think we've managed to do this.

What kind of potential does the EyeToy offer both developers and end users?

RF: For developers, it's an opportunity to be creative and innovative when thinking of ways to use the camera. For developers with online titles, they are no longer restricted to just having people speak with each other using a mic. They can now, potentially, be able to see each other as well. If the developers embrace

and support EyeToy, the end users will have a newer gaming experience.

How difficult is the EyeToy to develop for?

RF: It was kind of difficult for us, as we were the first to do something for it. Not only were we doing the software, we also had to develop the hardware of the EyeToy itself. We started out with about 6 people to prove the concept of using the camera as an interface device worked. We ended up with close to 20 people with a development time of just over a year, which I find quite incredible!

What prior experience in programming is advantageous for EyeToy applications?

RF: Surprisingly not that much experience. We were fortunate to have Dr. Richard Marks, who is the father of the technology within Sony, work with my programming team. From there, he and my lead programmer, Peter Marshall, worked together in stabilising the technology for home use. Other programmers that have joined the team have had no problems getting used to the technology.

If you could make technical changes to the current EyeToy hardware to improve it, what would they be?

RF: For now, there's actually nothing that I'd change with the current EyeToy. We've worked very hard in getting it as future-proof as possible. *Mike Wilcox*



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AUSSIE DEVELOPERS GET X'ED

In a move which should encourage more home-grown games, Microsoft is providing free Xbox development kits to Australian game creators. The kits include all the hardware and software required to develop and test Xbox games. It is the first time anywhere in the world that Microsoft has provided the kits for free, and follows Sony's similar and highly successful PS2 development kit scheme.

Funded by Microsoft and the Victorian Government, the XDK program will provide 18 Xbox developer kits for use by the state's growing interactive entertainment industry. The Game Developers' Association of Australia will manage the distribution of the kits. President Adam Lancman said there are 40 games developers in Australia employing over 600 people, and expects the number to grow to over 2000 within five years.

"This is yet another example of the Australian game development industry working together to promote the growth of the local industry," Lancman said. "The XDK program is a positive step towards that goal, particularly for Victoria, and I'm confident it will lead to the creation of world-class games built on the Xbox console."

Victoria dominates the Australian games development community, with game making companies including Melbourne House, Blue Tongue, IR Gurus, Tantalus, Bullant and Torus.
Jason Hill

Above: Victorian Premier Steve Bracks gets his ass kicked on Halo as Xbox head honcho Alan Bowman looks on.



One million & counting
Almost one in every 20
Australians now owns a PS2. Sony

Computer Entertainment has just announced that the PS2 eclipsed 1million sales locally and 60million worldwide. Impressive stuff, considering it has only been in the market for three years. However, Australia remains one of the strongest territories in the world for Xbox.

CYBERSHACK

PC games are about to move to a higher level of graphics, sound and gameplay quality with titles such as Doom 3 and Half Life 2 being released early next year. One question we at Cybershack have been asked is whether your current PC will run these feature packed games. Unfortunately, the answer for most of us is NO.

This has the PC role as a games machine once again in question. Are today's gamers willing to spend \$400 for a new graphics card? We're not talking about your hardcore gamer who visits his local LAN once a month and has built his PC into a flashing disco light. It's the mainstream gamers who play five hours a week and are responsible for the bulk of video game sales who have to be convinced.

If distributors can't excite gamers into a new hardware purchase with the enticement of better graphics, sound and gameplay, where will PC gaming go in future?

When looking at bang for buck, gamers are now torn between a PC that will do so much more than just play games and a next generation console that produces games that look almost as good as a PC. At just over \$300 the Xbox is good value and promises some high quality gaming, especially with online play now an option. Add to that Doom 3 and Half Life 2 are both rumoured to be in development for Xbox, so where is the benefit in the PC hardware investment?

Is the PC doomed as a gaming console? Perhaps not, as those fears have been around for a while now. Four years ago, when the PlayStation 1 was selling truck loads of consoles and software, it was believed that the days of the PC as a genuine force in gaming was over. Today the PC has developed into a machine that makes music, stores movies, connects us with friends all over the world and even edits home movies and plays games.

The PC is and always will be the leader in video game entertainment. The quality of games that are being released now and over the next six months will make you salivate. Save your Christmas money, mow your neighbour's lawn and get ready because 2004 on the PC will make your study shake!

Don't miss the Cybershack radio show which now features regular segments with the editor of Australian GamePro. For a list of stations where you can tune in, check out www.cybershackonline.com *Charlie Brown*



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


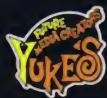
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PlayStation®2 NOVEMBER 2003



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ONE TO RULE THEM ALL

The biggest event of the summer! A look at the last film in the trilogy, its local star and the tie-in games. Your complete Tolkien guide...

The cultural impact of J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* is almost impossible to underestimate. The novel is one of the most popular ever written and won several respected newspaper polls as the Greatest Book of the 20th Century. Peter Jackson's film adaptations have been enormously successful, mainly because they remain faithful to Tolkien's vision, capturing the atmosphere perfectly. Obviously, the amazing computer animation and brilliant cast also helped.

In terms of games, there have been several Tolkien-based titles over the years – one of the more notable being a text adventure of *The Hobbit* made by Australian developer Melbourne House back in 1980. However, the films have opened the floodgates and while last year's *Fellowship of the Ring* (based on the book) and *The Two Towers* (based on the film) were quite successful, rest assured – you ain't seen nothing yet.

Electronic Arts' *Return of the King* game has just been released and leaves *The Two Towers* for dead, while Vivendi's *The Hobbit* and *War of the Ring* (both based on the novels) will both be out before Christmas. While they should keep you busy for a while, 2004 also looks set to be another Year of the Ring...



Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) puts on his kingly outfit and starts swinging his reforged sword around in ROTK



The Return of the King

Good, better, best. Can the King withstand the ultimate test?

The first two adaptations of J.R.R. Tolkien's fantasy trilogy are among the most critically-lauded and highest-grossing movies ever. For number three, New Zealand director Peter Jackson is aiming to go further, faster, harder and longer. According to white-hot rumours, The Return of the King will run a marathon three-and-a-half hours, so better pack a picnic, just in case.

Plotwise, the spooky little Gollum is tracking Frodo (Elijah Wood) as he hobbles towards Mount Doom, where he will attempt to destroy the Ring. Sam (Sean Astin) battles a killer spider (Shelob) – originally a plot line in Two Towers that Jackson kicked into King. The forces of good fight for Middle-earth in the massive Battle of the Pelennor Fields, which mightily ups the ante on the battle scenes in Two Towers. The noble ranger Aragorn (Viggo Mortensen) comes into his birth-right as the lost King of Gondor. He travels to Minas Tirith with Gimli (John Rhys-Davies) and Legolas (Orlando Bloom) to raise an army of undead soldiers and rescue the ancient city from Sauron's grasp.

ROTK was filmed three years ago, concurrent with Fellowship and Towers, but post-production – including extensive CGI, sound overdubs and scene pick-ups – was not completed until recently. Key cast members re-grouped in New Zealand earlier this year for additional voice work, which would have enabled Jackson to iron out any problems he detected with the previous two. With an unsullied track record, time on their side and advances in CGI during the

last two years, the Lord of the Rings team is unlikely to disappoint even its most critical fans. After two previous nominations, surely the Best Picture Oscar is now in sight?

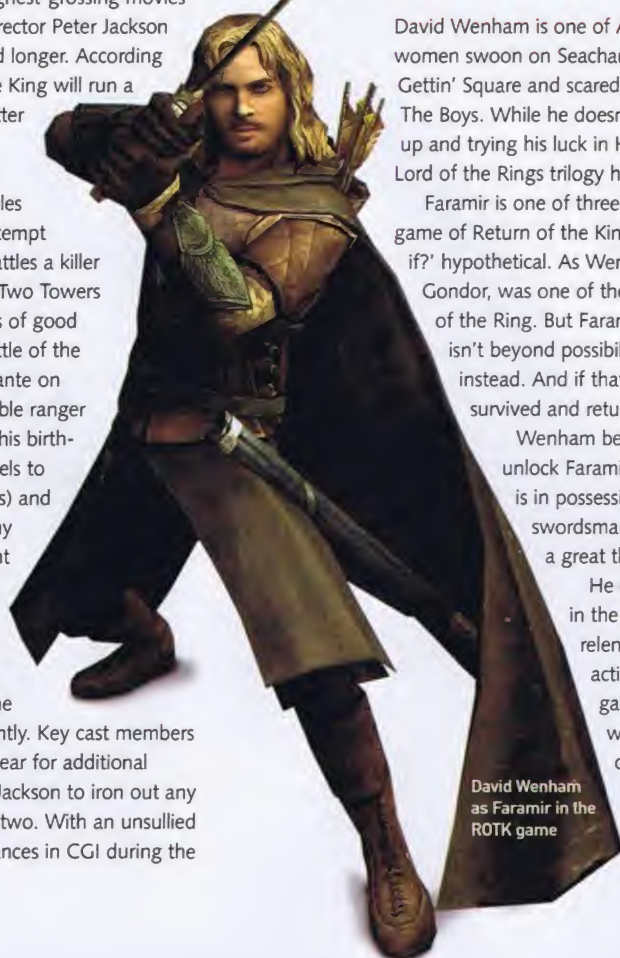
David Wenham: Faramir

David Wenham is one of Australia's favourite actors – he's made women swoon on Seachange, played up an Aussie stereotype in Gettin' Square and scared everyone with his nasty anti-hero in The Boys. While he doesn't seem overly interested in packing up and trying his luck in Hollywood, playing Faramir in The Lord of the Rings trilogy has guaranteed him international fame.

Faramir is one of three characters you can unlock in the game of Return of the King, and this raises an interesting 'what if?' hypothetical. As Wenham explains: "Faramir, Prince of Gondor, was one of the few men who withstood the power of the Ring. But Faramir and Boromir are brothers and it isn't beyond possibility that Faramir went to Rivendell instead. And if that happened, Faramir would have survived and returned to Gondor."

Wenham believes that "Game players should unlock Faramir first because he's a character who is in possession of multi-skills – he's a great swordsman, he's a great archer, and he's also a great thinker."

He describes Faramir's style of combat in the game as "extremely energetic. It's relentless – it's high-energy, high-voltage action." As for the Return of the King game as a whole, Wenham thinks it's a winner. "The game has totally captured the excitement, in all aspects, of the film Return of the King and I don't think you can ask for more than that."



David Wenham as Faramir in the ROTK game



Middle-earth Online

Developer: Turbine Entertainment

Publisher: Vivendi

Platform: PC

Release: Late 2004

Possibly the most exciting LOTR game in development, Middle-earth Online will allow gamers to live, work and fight for the fate of Tolkien's universe. Similar to Everquest and Ultima Online, you can choose your race (Elves, Man, Hobbits or Dwarves), skills (farmer, fighter, miner etc.), appearance (hairstyles, clothing, armour etc.) and allegiance (Sauron or Free Peoples).

One particularly cool feature allows you to upgrade your dwelling once you have contributed sufficiently to the cause and improved your status within the game. Like most MMORPGs, the gameplay is flexible, allowing you to go about your own thing or form a fellowship with other players and wage war for or against the Free Peoples of Middle-earth. This represents gamer's first true opportunity to become a part of the Lord of the Rings universe. There's no news yet on subscription fee but we'll bring you more info in 2004.

UPCOMING LORD OF

War of the Ring

Developer: Liquid Entertainment

Publisher: Vivendi

Platform: PC

Release: Nov 2003



One of Tolkien's biggest battles has yet to be fought. It's EA versus Vivendi and the battleground is the real-time strategy market. War of the Ring, similar to its competitor Battle for Middle-earth, allows gamers to tackle either the minions of Sauron or the forces of good across the epic battles found in Tolkien's legendary tome. This will include the Battle for Helm's Deep and the Siege of Dol Guldur.

On top of your usual hash'n'slack shenanigans, the magical properties of your forces can be exploited with some characters having special abilities that can be unleashed on the battlefield. These include the heroes, such as Frodo, Aragorn, Gandalf, Gimli, Gollum, Saruman and the Lord of the Nazgul. The most promising component, however, is its partnership with GameSpy that will allow up to eight players to duke it out within the famous Tolkien mythology.



Battle for Middle-Earth

Developer: EA

Publisher: EA

Platform: PC

Release: Mid 2004



If EA's Return of the King catchphrase was 'Play the Movie' then Battle for Middle-Earth will surely be 'Command the Movie'. Making a transition from beat 'em up to real-time strategy, gamers will have the opportunity to conduct the great battles seen in the Lord of the Rings films. Designed by the team behind Command and Conquer Red Alert 2 and C & C Generals, it will make use of the excellent Generals game engine.

What's most exciting is news that you can play either good or evil campaigns and thus control not only the forces of Gandalf and Aragorn, but the orc, troll and Oliphant ranks loyal to Saruman and Sauron. Each army will have distinctive strengths and weaknesses, plus the cast of the films will be on vocal duties and clips from the trilogy will be on display. EA know when they have a good thing going so you can happily look forward to them flogging this horse for quite a while longer.



THE RINGS GAMES



The Hobbit

Developer: Inevitable Entertainment

Publisher: Vivendi

Platforms: Xbox, PS2, GCN, PC, GBA

Release: Dec 2003



LOTR fans have begun a petition to have Peter Jackson add The Hobbit prequel to his upcoming movie schedule. The Hobbit contains 11 missions, following the chapters of the book and its hero Bilbo, as he seeks treasures from the dragon Smaug's lair and finds himself in the climactic Battle of the Five Armies.

The gameplay is a typical platform/adventure with plenty of side-quests, puzzles and collectables strewn across the book's many environments. In attack, Bilbo carries a staff and sword (Sting), but as you progress you'll find the One Ring and be able to turn yourself invisible for small periods of time. The game looks reasonable but it will not appeal to everyone, as it has been designed with the younger generation in mind - meaning reduced difficulty, cartoony graphics and surface plot development. If that isn't your cup of tea, you better sign that petition.

TALKING 'BOUT A REVOLUTION

VS Xbox Live

PS2 Network

Console Online Gaming may have been pioneered by Dreamcast, but now Xbox and PlayStation2 are bringing broadband gaming to the masses.

By Jason Hill



Online is the biggest revolution in console gaming since the advent of 3D graphics, opening up a world of entertainment into the living room. And unlike the insular online PC community, everyone is invited.

October saw the long-awaited launch of Xbox Live in Australia, followed just days later by Sony's release of its Network Adaptor for PlayStation2. Xbox Live is a feature-laden subscription-only service controlled by Microsoft, while PS2 Network Gaming is an open protocol that lets third party games publishers host servers and create the look and feel for their titles. While the two companies are using very different mechanisms, the end result is the same: you don't have to play with yourself anymore.

Anyone who has sampled the delights of multiplayer gaming knows that competing against or teaming up with fellow humans is more compelling and entertaining than predictable and dim-witted computer-controlled characters. Whether you are raiding an enemy fortress, getting big air in a half-pipe or trying to score the match-winner in the last seconds of a sports simulation, playing with mates increases the enjoyment level immeasurably.

Both Xbox and PS2 require broadband Internet connections like cable or ADSL, which unfortunately excludes many from joining the party. But broadband helps ensure the experience is

as fast and smooth as possible, as if mates were huddled around a single console.

Both Sony and Microsoft are making big investments in online technology to build a foundation for the

next-generation. The gee-whiz console you proudly bring home in a few years time will no doubt offer a total entertainment solution, being able to download video, music and games. Both companies want to control the hub of a new era of networked entertainment.

For those that don't yet have a broadband connection, Microsoft and Sony are teaming up with Internet Service Providers to provide online gaming bundles. ISPs are hoping that gaming will help attract new broadband

subscribers, and more flexible packages in terms of pricing and download limits are expected.

GamePro has enjoyed testing both Xbox Live and PS2 Network Gaming over several months. We got both services up and running within minutes using a Telstra Bigpond cable connection and a Belkin Router. Challenging both friends and strangers proved hugely addictive and entertaining, and performance was always solid.

Xbox Live

Gamers have had to wait patiently to plug into the worldwide Xbox Live matrix, but Microsoft designed its console with online capabilities in mind from the start. The built-in ethernet connection and hard drive are real strengths over the PS2, and Microsoft has also delivered a feature-packed online service.

Live starter kits cost \$99.95 and include a 12-month

subscription, plus the comfortable Communicator headset and demos. After 12-months, you will be charged a fee, expected to be no more than \$10 a month.

Some will consider the subscription fee to be a burden on top of already high broadband bills, but Live includes a raft of features to enhance online gaming. The player's account details are stored on the hard drive, and the interface is always the same regardless of what game you have in the tray. The level of integration is impressive, and makes Live a breeze to use.

When signing up, players select a unique "Gamertag" that becomes their online identity for every game. The Gamertag makes it simple to keep track of friends. Even if a mate is playing a different game, you can send an invite to come and join you. You will also soon be able to invite friends using Instant Messaging or SMS, and can use the "My Live" page on the Internet to check whether friends are playing and how you are faring on the scoreboards.

Live also includes excellent matchmaking capabilities so that you can quickly join games at your skill level. It's frustrating continually being blown away by opponents or playing minnows not up to your abilities. And the world rankings provide a compelling incentive to keep improving your skills.

Voice is integrated into all Live titles. Whether it's catching up with faraway buddies, formulating strategies with teammates



"Very impressed with Xbox Live. The setup was quick and easy, finding games was easy and lag-free."
Jose Cuervo, 24-year-old student.



"I can now see how good (or bad) at a game I am. Anyone can finish a game if they work hard enough, but playing against another person is just so much more fun and challenging." Anthony Palmer, 22-year-old chef





or trash talking opponents, the headset ensures a more social and fun experience. You can even chat outside of a game thanks to the upgraded dashboard.

We're not convinced on the merits of voice masking, however. Anonymity is sometimes appealing but options like the high-pitched schoolgirl can quickly annoy. Fortunately, you can choose to mute anyone irritating.



"Console gaming is just easier (compared to PC) in every aspect, and the controller is better for gaming purposes." Rod Strong, 29-year-old salesman

Many titles offer downloading of additional content, including missions, characters, vehicles, weapons and multi-player maps. GamePro does not want to encourage developers to hold back content that should be included on the disc, but bonus content that extends a game's lifespan and value is appreciated.

Microsoft Australia has not invested in local servers, but during testing GamePro found this to be a minor issue. The peer-to-peer nature of Live means that as long as you play with other Aussies in games that can be affected by lag, you will enjoy fast and smooth action. So while the likes of MotoGP are fine playing with people all over the world, stick with Aussies for your Wolfenstein sessions.

Over 40 Live titles will be available in Australia before Christmas. Over half a million starter kits have been sold worldwide, ensuring that there is action regardless of the time of day.

Some of the best titles available include MotoGP 2, Ghost Recon, Return to Castle Wolfenstein, MechAssault, Midtown Madness 3, Unreal Championship, Project Gotham Racing 2, Top Spin, Crimson Skies, XIII, Amped 2 and Rainbow Six 3. We can also look forward to blockbuster Halo 2, True Fantasy



Live Online, Conker: Live and Uncut, Counter-Strike and V8 Supercars. Selected titles will come with a free two-month trial of Live so you can dip your toe in the water.

Alan Bowman, Xbox Asia Pacific General Manager, said gamers worldwide were "taking up the Live service with great enthusiasm, and we are extremely pleased with the results to date."

Bowman was bullish about Live's advantages over PS2. "At 10% the number of Xbox console owners who are taking up Live is more than double that of the PS2 owners who are purchasing the network adaptor (4%). Xbox Live is actually a service and not just a piece of hardware. Xbox Live is taking online gaming to a completely new level and allowing gamers of any skill and technical experience to get online and play, easily and simply. The PS2 model is basically taking PC online gaming to the console and does nothing to extend the online gaming experience, or the appeal beyond the current hardcore gamer."

Bowman said online features will only grow in importance, and suggested Nintendo will have a handicap in the next generation. "Undeniably the future of videogaming is in the online world – and we have invested heavily in a service which we know will set us up for success in this business. Anyone who can't deliver in this realm will be severely disadvantaged with the next generation of consumers." ▶

XBOX LIVE

Advantages: Easy to use, great voice integration, friends lists and matchmaking options, content downloads, big range of games available, built-in ethernet.

Disadvantages: Subscription fee, no EA support and no local servers.

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PS2 Network

It is ironic the mass-market PlayStation2 is the console with an open, PC-like standard for online gaming while the more hardcore Xbox has the friendlier service. But few gamers will have trouble getting online with PS2 and the open protocol of Network Gaming certainly has advantages.

To get online with a PS2, gamers need to purchase the \$69.95 Network Adaptor, bundled with a copy of the combat game Hardware Online Arena. Connection settings are stored on a Memory Card and accessed by all online titles. While each game has a different interface, you are not required to enter your configuration settings every time you play.

GamePro has experienced no problems, but the more anarchic PS2 system is clearly not as user-friendly as Xbox Live. Finding friends and games at your skill level is more difficult, although some users might prefer having different identities for different games.

PS2's advantage is that the vast majority of titles will not require fees. Everquest Online Adventures is the only title so far to require a monthly subscription.

In a massive boon for Sony, Electronic Arts has announced online play will be exclusive to PS2. EA has made a significant investment in its own online technology and does not

want to get locked out of future revenue by supporting Live. Fortunately, EA's PS2 titles will be free to play online for now, but not forever.

FIFA Football 2004, Medal of Honor Rising Sun, SSX 3, Need for Speed Underground and The Sims Bustin' Out are EA's first PS2 titles with online multiplayer features. No Australian servers are planned, although Sony says it is happy to talk to third parties about hosting.

Some of the best PS2 online titles out now include SOCOM, Twisted Metal Black Online, Amplitude, EverQuest Online Adventures, ATV Offroad Fury 2, Fire Warrior, Tony Hawk's Underground and Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm. The likes of Gran Turismo 4, Tribes Aerial Assault, Resident Evil and Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain are coming soon.

Michael Ephraim, Managing Director of Sony Computer



"The PS2 network gaming is great! It's very user friendly. Team games online are the most fun. It's always good fun to see your mate being attacked, and then come to the rescue with a barrage of bullets." **David Latham, 18-year-old student**



Entertainment Australia, says Networking Gaming offers PS2 owners "a new and exciting games feature as well as providing a real community in which to play. It also offers the broader audience a compelling reason to consider connecting to broadband in the home."

Ephraim said online gaming would initially appeal to the "dedicated and passionate core gamers", but in time would reach the masses. "This is not something that we expect to go through the roof in the early days. It is the first time a mass-market device has connected to broadband in the lounge room, and is the first step towards convergence. But our testing has shown that if you have the right equipment it is easy to set up."

Sony is pleased with the take up of the Network Adaptor, with over 880,000 sold globally, said Ephraim. The Australian target would be 20-60,000 in the first 12 months.

Ephraim said Sony had invested \$2 million in servers to host "lag-free gaming" for the first six months of Network Gaming, and criticised Microsoft for not making the same investment. "No matter what other features you offer...if you have lag, the basic proposition is compromised."

Ephraim believes the open PS2 network will encourage more third party support. "Content owners don't want to be dictated to in a closed environment, we have seen that from EA. With PS2 we can encourage innovation and evolve as the technology improves and it will still be seamless to the consumer."

He says that Sony's online investment is paving the way for an exciting future. "This is the first step, it's not the end game. Even in the next six months to two years the whole online gaming offering will change and improve. When we look ahead to the next generation we will have built the foundation."

"When you choose a Sony product, you've going with a company that has a long term vision. SCE is the innovator in the games business and we'll see that innovation in the next 2-5 years, growing on the foundation we've created with online gaming." **GIF**

PS2 NETWORK

Advantages: Most games free to play online, Australian servers for some games, EA support, open standard, players can have multiple identities.

Disadvantages: Must purchase network adaptor, voice not integrated into all games, no hard drive for downloaded content, no common interface, difficult to find friends.

PS2 NETWORK vs XBOX LIVE GAMEPRO VERDICT

Xbox Live is the more feature-laden service, and has a wider range of games at present, but PS2 owners have the advantage of EA support and fast local servers for some games. Both Xbox Live and PS2 Network Gaming offer easy setup, robust speed, big communities and endless entertainment. So no matter which console you own, online play will be fun.

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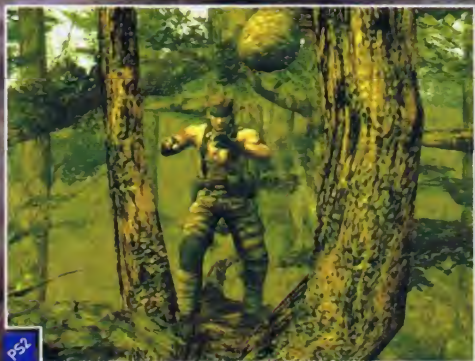


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“...we knew we had to do something drastic to surprise everyone.” HIDEO KOJIMA

Union OF THE SNAKE

Solid Snake bites twice in Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes for the GameCube, and again in Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater for the PS2. GamePro went undercover and got the latest intel from the men behind the Metal. **By Major Mike**

Prior to 2003's Electronic Entertainment Expo, there was buzz aplenty regarding the next Metal Gear installment. Trailers for upcoming titles in the series have become show events since the first one debuted in 1997. This year was no different, with audiences packing Konami's booth for a glimpse of Solid Snake's upcoming adventure, Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater for the PlayStation 2. However, Konami had a card up its sleeve: Solid Snake would make a second appearance this one on the GameCube under the tagline The Twin Snakes. Unlike Snake Eater, Twin Snakes will be a remake of the first Metal Gear Solid that appeared on the PlayStation but with better graphics and new surprises.

For the uninitiated, Metal Gear Solid was a huge hit because of its innovative gameplay. Released in an era when action games were a dime a dozen, MGS did a rare thing: It emphasized the art of sneaking rather than fighting and created an action sub-genre whose influence is apparent in popular contemporary games such as Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell.

THE POWER OF TWO

Konami Producer Hideo Kojima always wanted to work with Nintendo's Shigeru Miyamoto but never had the opportunity. Unfortunately, the producer was knee-deep in Snake Eater when Nintendo approached with a proposal for a Solid Snake adventure on the GameCube. Rather than pass up the opportunity, Kojima was confident a quality GameCube Metal Gear title could happen namely, by remaking Metal Gear Solid. The next hurdle was finding a developer.

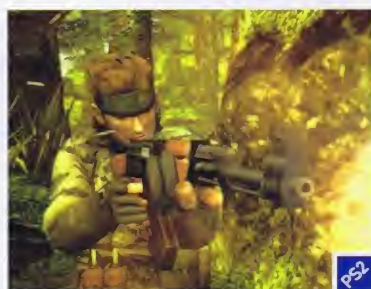
"When we decided to develop Twin Snakes, we had to look for a development team that had experience on the GameCube", says Kojima. "We ended up not finding such

a team in Japan. Shigeru Miyamoto recommended Silicon Knights (developer of Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem) to us." Aside from Miyamoto's recommendation, there were other factors in selecting the Canada-based developer. "There is really no point for the same staff five years later to do a simple remake", says Kojima. "That's why I decided to go with Knights the introduction of new blood into the development of Twin Snakes."

Akin to the GameCube remake of the original Resident Evil, Twin Snakes retains the skeletal story of its source material - as Solid Snake, you must thwart terrorists who possess nuclear weapons at a remote Alaskan base - but adds a host of new features (see sidebar, Twin Snakes: Hands-On Impressions). Obvious graphical improvements aside, Twin Snakes uses the play engine from Sons of Liberty, meaning Snake can dangle from railings; hide subdued guards in lockers; roll while running and knock over enemies like bowling pins; and switch to first-person view on the fly. Conversely, the A.I.'s been given an I.Q. boost as guards follow trails of blood and footsteps in the snow, and occasionally check in with each other via radio. With any break in the communication chain, alert status goes up a notch and reinforcements are called to the scene. Another key facet of the original Metal Gear Solid in-game cinema sequences were completely redone for Twin Snakes by popular Japanese film director Ryuhei Kitamura (Versus, Azumi).

SNAKE EAT SNAKE?

As Silicon Knights remixes the past, Konami's team is focused on the franchise's future. Slated for an early 2004 release on the PS2, Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater is a large departure from previous Snake adventures. For starters, the game takes



place during the 1960s Cold War (prequel!) in thick jungle: Two-thirds takes place outdoors in caves, waterfalls, and mountains and the remaining one-third in buildings. "Since Snake Eater is the second MGS game for the PS2, we had to do something drastic to surprise everyone", says Kojima. "We also knew that the jungle is what we the developers of MGS, fans, and people in the industry wanted".

Sneak Eater's setting will play a key role in the game not only visually, but also in terms of gameplay. "In real espionage missions, the agent never gets to start right outside the enemy base", says Kojima. "In reality, they land a few hundred miles away in a country right next to the country where the target is. In the jungle, you have to fight not only human enemies, but also the landscape and the weather". Being outdoors, Snake can't get rations out of a nearby locker; instead, he must eat animals and reptiles, and carefully manage his food supply otherwise it could rot.

THE LAY OF THE LAND

Of course, it wouldn't be MGS without stealth, and Snake Eater promises the most challenging use of the technique yet. There will be no radar in the upper-right corner of the screen; seemingly innocuous dry leaves and water puddles could alert guards as Snake tries to sneak up on them; various booby traps provide nasty surprises for careless players; and the uneven terrain forces players to be more cautious when

There will be no radar; seemingly innocuous dry leaves and puddles could alert guards as Snake sneaks up on them

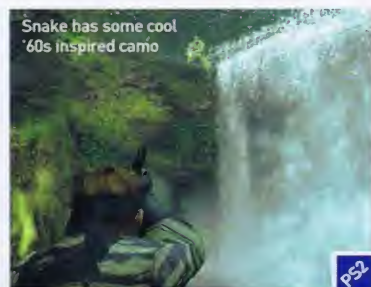


moving. Then there are adverse weather conditions, including rain, heat, and the occasional brush fire. Characters could fracture limbs by falling from high places (a real hazard as tall trees and cliffs are prime sniper nests), and an online component in the form of different-colored camouflage patterns may be implemented.

As for the other burning question among fans: Will Snake be the sole playable character in the game? "The main character will remain the same throughout Snake Eater", Kojima says. "Although you don't switch characters midway through the game [as was the case with Sons of Liberty], there will be something to replace that this time around, and I don't want to ruin the surprise".

TWIN SNAKES: HANDS-ON IMPRESSIONS

Vets of the PlayStation MGS games should have no problem adapting to the game's engine on the GameCube controller. The graphical improvements are a plus as is the enemy A.I., and the subtle effects (such as the bullet-time effect that occurs when you're fired at while submerged) are cool touches. While Twin Snakes doesn't feel like a brand-new experience the new play techniques add style to an already excellent game.



TOO MUCH SNAKE?

With the release of Substance last year, Twin Snakes any time now, and Snake Eater in early 2004, there's a lot of Snake to digest. "I do not intend to mass-produce side stories or spin-offs of MGS", Kojima says. "The temptation from a business standpoint is there, but releasing too many titles weakens the brand". If you ask any Metal Gear fan, however, there's probably no such thing as too much Snake.

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MONSTERS' BALL

Demons, zombies and gamers converged on Dallas for Quakecon 2003 – where ID Software gave us a surprise sneak peek at Doom 3. By Dan Elektro

Nine o'clock in the morning is no time to be, well, awake, frankly. But it's even less appropriate an hour to expect someone to hoist a shotgun and level it at a fellow gamer's head. Yet in the scant few hours before QuakeCon 2003 erupts, this early morning block of time is the media's first and best chance to play the multiplayer demo of id Software's upcoming first-person shooter, Doom 3.

"There is a power-up called Berserk," warns Programmer Robert Duffy before the game. "It is a good thing to have. If you see someone else get it, you should run."

"You can spot guys with the Berserk because their heads are on fire," id CEO Todd Hollenshead chimes in helpfully.

Berserk is a good word for the reaction to id's decision to give its biggest fans and supporters a very early sneak peek at Doom 3's multiplayer mode, several months

before the final game's release. The debut took place at QuakeCon, the annual, Dallas-area LAN party that now draws over 3000 people, most of whom lug their PCs and monitors from home to create an enormous, 96-hour, bring-your-own-computer game network. This year, players are competing for \$125,000 in Quake and Return to Castle Wolfenstein tournaments, showing their creativity in their PC case modifications, drinking Bawls by the case, and scoring freebies from vendor demonstrations of bleeding-edge gaming hardware.

And yet, Doom 3 overshadowed it all.

GET YOUR ASS TO MARS

"In Doom 3, we sort of pretend that Doom and Doom II didn't happen – it's a retelling of the original Doom," says Hollenshead. "You are a space Marine who is part of a security detail assigned to the Union Aerospace Corporation research facility on Mars,

where they are conducting top-secret experiments. You go to Mars with your team, and pretty soon after landing, literally all Hell breaks loose – demons, zombies, and hellspawn all come after you." Armed with conventional weapons like shotguns and rocket launchers as well as futuristic favorites including plasma rifles, you'll have to stop the demons from taking over the facility, Mars, and ultimately, Earth.

For Doom 3, shy genius programmer John Carmack – who has set the standard for PC game technology since id's earliest releases – has created a groundbreaking new engine. "We have our own internal proprietary physics engine that we use to make the world very interactive and immersive," says Hollenshead. "We have a new animation system and artificial intelligence; and we wrap all that up in a bow of six-channel surround sound."

Not that that package has been



FOR THE HARDCORE

QuakeCon (www.QuakeCon.org) is not just about just about tournaments or hardware or even the games – it's about passion. Modded PC case and freaky haircut optional.



Meet the new look Revenant – freaky!



Todd Hollenshead wants Doom 3 to be 'an intense, terrifying experience – we want you playing by yourself in the dark with the lights off, afraid to look under the table.'



easy to wrap. "This technology is so new in every aspect that we have no one to follow and no precedent to look to," admits Doom 3's lead designer, Tim Willits. "We're blazing our own trail. There is so much we can do with the technology and so much learning we've done that, to be honest, it's taken us longer than we thought. We have all this power, all this creativity – whatever we can imagine, we can do in this engine. And that's what we're trying to push."

FRIGHTENINGLY REAL

In the single-player levels and the multiplayer game, curved surfaces are everywhere, and the dramatic lighting and distressed metal walls give the game a strong Aliens feel – isolated, desperate, and paranoid. There are areas of the base that the netherworld has claimed as its own, so some steel UAC corridors suddenly devolve into Pery, flesh-covered hallways of Hell. For far greater aiming accuracy, Doom

3 supports per-polygon hit detection; in one level, a Marine's suspended, inverted corpse writhes and sways with every pistol shot. These rag-doll physics apply to all other bodies in the game, too; in the single-player game, corpses remain as interactive objects.

What's more, the environment warps and changes as well. For instance, since the game takes place on Mars, a shattered outside window will create a deadly vacuum in the facility. In one single-player scenario, a huge, bull-like Pinky Demon charges at a thick steel door, bending it obscenely with every hit. (Naturally, you're on the other side of that door.) "We can have demons coming out of walls, breaking down doors, literally anywhere we want to," says Hollenshead. Enemies include spider-like Trites (look closely – they're inverted human heads with legs), skittering two-headed monsters called Maggots, and far more threatening versions of old nemeses like Imps and Revenants.

The dynamic lighting and shadows do the most to set Doom 3's mood. Lights can be turned off or blasted out; your player casts an accurate, real-time shadow. It's all part of the fear factor. Players are equipped with a flashlight, which doubles as a bludgeoning weapon in tight spots.

GROUND ZERO, TEXAS

Back on the main floor of QuakeCon, the buzz builds as more gamers get their first taste of Doom 3's multiplayer; now it will be a long wait until the game's 2004 release. Somewhere along the way, id Software might just revolutionize first-person shooters yet again. "John Carmack had a vision of Doom when he made it in 1992," explains Willits. "With this technology – real-time lighting, dynamic shadows, bump mapping, incredibly detailed models, cool blood, great gore – his nightmare vision of Doom could be a reality."

idP

SECRETS & LIES

A topless Lara Croft? Millions of buried cartridges? Mind-control games? You won't believe some of the greatest urban legends – even the ones that are true.



1 Atari buried a bunch of crap game cartridges in the desert.

TRUE If you think bargain bins are overflowing with lackluster games now, consider the situation in 1982. Atari was in the midst of making some dreadful mistakes, including a costly licensing deal for the home version of Pac-Man; 12 million copies were made, but the Atari 2600 only had an active install base of 10 million. To try and rebound from that, Atari licensed E.T. from Stephen Spielberg – but the rush-it-out-for-Christmas deal meant that the game had to be created in six weeks. Unsurprisingly, it looked and played like shit. Atari made 5 million cartridges and was stuck with most of them collecting dust in warehouses. Realizing they'd never sell, Atari dumped millions of E.T. cartridges into a New Mexico landfill. When people found the site, Atari had the carts crushed and the landfill covered with cement. For the full story from the people who lived through the debacle, check Stephen Kent's book 'The Ultimate History of Video Games'.



2 The U.S military has used video games to train soldiers since the early 1980s.

TRUE OK, so maybe Missile Command isn't exactly a serious simulation, but the U.S. military has been using modified versions of games for over 20 years. The first was a customized version of Battlezone called Bradley Trainer (programmed by Battlezone's designer Ed Rotberg). The cabinet looks like a regular Battlezone machine but with over a dozen extra switches and knobs, as well as a custom control grip corresponding with the controls of a Bradley M2 Infantry Fighting Vehicle (still in use today). Two prototypes were made in 1981 and only

one is known to exist today. The most celebrated use of games as training tools was Marine Doom, a custom version of Doom II created to teach soldiers about teamwork, fog of war and the behaviour of weapons like M-16s and M-249s. Oh, and it was cool to play too. "The fun factor is very important," Project Officer Lt. Scott Barnett told the Government Computer News. "That's what makes our Marines want to use it. But it's an honest-to-God training tool: you can do mission rehearsal, mission planning." Currently, NovaLogic is building a custom version of Delta Force 2: Land Warrior, the U.S. Navy gives a custom version of Microsoft Flight Simulator to all student pilots, and Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear is being used for urban warfare training.

3 You can launch missiles with a PlayStation2

MAYBE When the PS2 debuted, there was a hullabaloo over export laws. The main processor was so advanced that it was classified as a super-computer and therefore not allowed to leave Japan. The fear was that an enterprising hacker could harness its ability for very fast maths calculations and use it to control, say, a guided missile system. Export laws had to be changed so the PS2 could be released worldwide. However, reports circulated that Saddam Hussein imported several dozen PS2s upon the machine's launch. Were these gifts for his nephews, or intended for more nefarious military purposes? Can the PS2 really be used as part of a weapon of mass destruction? Let's hope we never find out...

Saddam's not dead – he's in hiding playing with his PS2

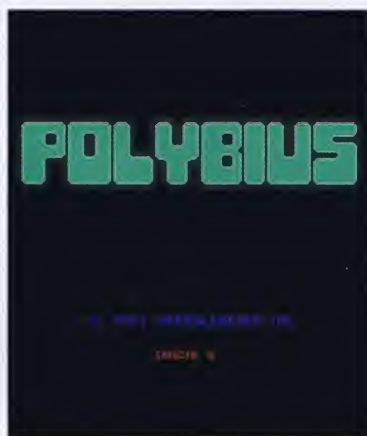




Lara coyly shows some pixelated flesh...

4 The PlayStation is really just a redesigned Super NES CD drive.

FALSE This is based on just enough truth for gamers to get it wrong forever. In 1988, Sony and Nintendo agreed to work together on a CD-ROM attachment for the Super NES console. By 1991, Sony was planning its own game system called the Play Station (two words), that also played SNES games as well as its own "Super Disc" format. Not wanting to share control or profits, Nintendo brokered a new deal with Philips without telling Sony; it all went down with an embarrassingly public announcement at the Consumer Electronics Show in 1992. Essentially stabbed in the back, Sony came up with a new, stand-alone console codenamed Play Station X (where the old 'PSX' abbreviation came from), designed to kick the snot out of the SNES. That machine – and not some leftover blueprint – would eventually be released in Japan as the PlayStation (one word) in 1994. Meanwhile, Nintendo's Philips SNES CD drive never materialized.



Some games are so bad they give you nightmares, but pain was the aim in Polybius




5 There's a secret nude code for Tomb Raider.

FALSE This is a classic case of wishful fanboy thinking. Lara Croft is hot. A lot of video gamers are teenage boys with raging hormones. Ergo, ask a teen male gamer what he wants to see and the answer is fairly obvious. Let it be said: No nude code exists for any Tomb Raider game. However, an enterprising bunch of hackers have created patches for the PC versions of the game that replace Lara's clothing textures with naked flesh ones – but that's an independent, user-created thing. In fact, Tomb Raider's just one of several PC hits (The Sims, Quake, Jedi Knight II, GTA3...um, Britney's Dance Beat... and amazingly, F1 2002) to get stripped down by the dateless gaming community with unauthorized nude patches. But official codes built in by the programmers? No.

6 The U.S government made an arcade game that erased kids' memories and gave them nightmares

MAYBE Using games for military training is one thing: using games for mind control... well, that's something else. But there's a cryptic tale of an arcade game called Polybius that appeared in a handful of locations in Portland, Oregon in the early 1980s. Credited to a company called Sinnesloschen, Polybius (named for a Greek historian who dabbled in cryptography) was an abstract puzzle game that reportedly caused nightmares and memory loss (Sinnesloschen is German for "sense deleting") in those who played it. And to seal the deal, one arcade owner claimed that black-coated gentlemen would periodically come to collect data – but not coins – from the machines. Unfortunately, what's missing is proof. While a ROM reportedly exists, it hasn't actually been located. A title screen (see image) is all anyone seems able to produce – and these are easy to create in Photoshop. Also, nobody seems willing to name names or authenticate any of the tales floating around on the Internet – nothing can be verified by a reliable source.

But still... what if it's true? 



(Mmmm... Donuts)

Ever reclined lazily in front of a PlayStation, Xbox or PC, thrashing the hell out of Colin McRae Rally and smugly thought – “pfft, I could do this”? Then set your face to stun before you turn over the next page, because GamePro is giving you the opportunity to see if you’ve got what it takes. But we thought we should try it out ourselves first and DAVID KVASNICKA was the lucky soul who got to sample some extreme rally driving action...

W

aking up at 5.30 a.m. for the drive to Cessnock is usually a mortal sin for my body, but when you’ve been asked to go out and thrash around a few rally cars for work purposes, there aren’t many reasons to object! The package includes theoretical and practical lessons on the art of rally driving, a nice big lunch, a hoon around on their Stage in varying Rally cars, and finally, a show of how it’s really done by a professional Rally driver, while you ride shotgun.

As you could imagine, doing it for real shifts all over the best any Rally game could ever deliver. Sure, with Colin McRae Rally your arse can stay firmly planted on a couch, in relative safety, but the real thing has got to be experienced to be believed. It’s damn good fun. And to top it all off, I walked away from the day feeling a hell of a lot more confident behind any given set of wheels.

It all started in the morning with some quick cornering pointers from experienced rally driver Andrew Pinker. He took us through the differences in braking techniques between front-wheel, rear-wheel, and four-wheel drives. The theory-side of things was agreeably short, and in no time at all we were out on the practice arena, waiting for the two cars that were to be our trainers. They turned out to be the Toyota Sprint (rear-wheel), and the Toyota Celica (4WD).

After some rather embarrassing stalls (hey, I haven’t driven a



manual in ages!), I was off perfecting my cornering techniques on the gravelly surface of the arena. This basically involves driving around in circles at high speed, but it was fun all the same. Each instructor sat in the co-driver's seat and gave hands-on guidance on the control aspects of each machine, for example the "stabbing" of the brakes in a 4WD while cornering (which, amazingly, works like a charm). You discover things about technique and handling of four-wheeled machines that would be difficult to learn no matter how long you practiced on roads.

Afterwards, it was back to base for a bit of lunch which, incidentally, looked good enough to eat. We were treated to various salads, quiche, rolls, cold-cut meats, and so on – essentially a nicely balanced meal which kept our stomachs stable and our concentrations sharp.

We were then ready to try for the real thing on ExtremeDriving.net's Stage - a good ol' dirty bush track. This is only way to find out if you're able to apply the principles you picked up in the practice arena. Here is where the fun really begins. The instructors give you standard co-driver talk-through on upcoming turns, and their level of difficulty (1 – 6), while you fly around the track as fast as you can. The instructors were absolute legends in that they really let you thrash the crap out of the machines, pushing them to the limits of what probably shouldn't be done to them by a veritable Rally newbie like myself. As one instructor told me, the machines "like a bit of punishment, it's the only way to get them to do what you want them to". I just smiled and nodded - no arguments there.

Inside the rally cars, you're so utterly surrounded by roll bars and safety gear that you feel compelled to really take it as far as

you can (this and maybe the fact that the Ed suggested a crash would make a great photo...). There's an overwhelming feeling of invincibility when you're driving in the machines, even at high speeds.

Unsurprisingly, that sentiment wasn't shared by the instructors when I mentioned it during an explanation of how I ended up in a wild spin-out after hitting a 90-degree corner at some absurdly negligent speed. The instructor with me at the time, Dominic Clifton, deserves a particular naming for his astonishing ability in keeping cool despite my reckless disregard for our safety. Sorry, mate!

While we're on the topic, hats off to all the instructors – Mark Hattam, Andrew Pinker, and Dominic - whose steady nerves are simply remarkable considering they constantly place life and limb in the hands of inexperienced strangers, just for the love of rallying.

Finally, at sundown we were given what's called the "Hot Lap". Andrew jumped in the driver's seat and took us – or I should say, flew us - through the Stage. Within seconds, our feeble Rallying efforts were put to shame as we saw first hand how an expert uses the machine to leap effortlessly around corners with stunning precision at twice the speed. It would've been good to have had that experience at the start of the day, but I was quickly informed of the logic behind the decision – "everyone would try to pull off the same crazy shit that we do." Yep, good thinking guys.

All in all, great fun, a great day, and one that won't soon be forgotten.

For your chance to do it, turn the page....

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Australian GamePro and the Neal Bates Toyota Team Racing have teamed up to offer some lucky GamePro readers the rally car experience of a life time. Having purchased the launch issue of Australia GamePro you are now eligible to go in the draw to win the following hot prize pool.

MAJOR PRIZE: One lucky reader will win the ultimate rally experience for two people at Rally Queensland. The winners will be flown to Queensland with Virgin Airlines with two nights twin share accommodation in Caloundra. On race day, the winners will receive two VIP tickets to the QLD Rally event and access to corporate facilities. They will also sit beside Neal Bates for a hot lap they will never forget.

RUNNER UP PRIZES: Separate to the main prize, GamePro magazine will also offer four runner up prizes in QLD, NSW, Vic and WA. Each runner up will receive a half day driving experience with Extreme Rally. This will involve getting behind the wheel of a real rally car and experience first hand the adrenalin rush of driving a rally car.



To enter, just go to:
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the Corporate Box at the QLD Rally Event (\$600), two (2) return economy airfares from any state to the Gold Coast flying Virgin Airlines (\$1500), Transfers for two (2) to the Rally Event (\$350), one (1) night twin share accommodation at the Kings Bay Serviced Apartments, Morton Close, Caloundra QLD (\$170) and a Rally Ride and Day with Team (\$10,000). The Major Prize must be taken in the month of June 2004 when the second (2nd) round of the Australian Rally Championship Super Series in Caloundra has been organised (TBA). The Runners Up prize is valued at \$1580 and comprises of: one (1) Extreme Rally 1/2 day driving experience (\$395). There will be one (1) Runner up winner from each of the following states: Western Australia, Queensland, Victoria and New South Wales. The Runners Up Prize must be taken before 30 June 2004. 6. The prize is not transferable or exchangeable and cannot be taken as cash. In the event that for any reason whatsoever a prize winner does not take an element of the prize at a time stipulated by the Promoters, then the element of the prize will be forfeited by the prize winner and cash will not be awarded in lieu of that prize. 7. Spending money and meals are not included. 8. If a person under the age of 18 years wins, the prize will only be delivered to a parent or authorised guardian over the age of 18 years. 9. As the prizes are

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Driver 3

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|-------------|------------|----------------------|
| PS2/PC | Reflections | Atari | Apr 2004 |

Look closely at the cover of this very magazine and you will see a large circular disc heaped with goodies and one prized PC game, the original *Driver*. Originally released on the PSone in 1999, *Driver* was an integral predecessor to next-generation console gaming. A free roaming racer with an underground demeanour, it simply oozed gameplay and paved the way for *The Getaway*, *Tony Hawk Underground* and one *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. After the critically and commercially successful release of *Driver 2* in 2000, the completion of the trilogy was assured, but three long years later and gamers are still waiting for the next instalment in this cult franchise. Will the wait be worth it?

Bloody oath! *Driver 3* looks simply awesome and Rockstar's reign as the king of gaming cool may meet its grisly demise come Easter 2004. Essentially, Reflection Interactive has raised the bar on the genre they created with ludicrous levels of interactivity, stunning graphics and gameplay deeper than the Java trench. Better start putting your

thumbs on a carbohydrate fitness regime because they are in for one hell of a workout.

Driver 3 revolves around an evil conglomerate known as 'The Syndicate' who are dealing in the illegal trade of high-performance vehicles. Obviously they must be dealt some comeuppance and Tanner, our undercover hero, is just the man for the job. The action takes place over 3 cities, Nice in France,

Ludicrous levels of interactivity, stunning graphics and gameplay deeper than the Java trench

Istanbul in Turkey and old favourite Miami. Before you point out that this represents a reduction in cities from previous *Driver* ventures, you should note that these are much, much bigger with 150 miles of road and 30,000 buildings. *D3* also promises unparalleled levels of reality with plenty of non-playing characters (NPCs), photo-realistic buildings and impressive attention to detail (like

waves rolling up the beach) absorbing gamers into the experience.

The cities will be truly astonishing. NPCs will go about their lives by talking to friends, wandering down to the shops, having a feed or filling up their cars with no idea of the danger unfolding around them. As if that wasn't good enough, you can jump out of your vehicle, head to a window and peer in, where business in the homes of the world goes on as usual. With such detail, it is quite possible to ignore the missions and simply watch the events of the world go by or, if you're getting a little hot, head down to the beach for a swim. Reflections Interactive have brilliantly simulated life in *Driver 3*, the life of Tanner that is.

Driver 3 will be decidedly more linear than the likes of *Vice City* and with the completion of each level, Tanner slips further into the syndicate. Information on the missions is scarce, but 70% of them will take place in vehicles while 30% has Tanner doing the hard yards on foot. The entire experience will be plot-driven with plenty of rendered



cut-scenes narrating the story as you progress. For fans of the franchise, one notable addition to D3 is guns. These can be found or taken off victims and used to 'persuade' baddies to lie down and play dead. Don't expect anything as sophisticated as a sniper however, these weapons will be of the spray and splatter variety.

The Driver series has always hinged on automobiles and the new game's vehicular quotient is phenomenal. The physics engine is incredibly advanced and goes well beyond the big jumps, doughnuts and power slides that gamers expect. For example, when you brake the car will tip towards the front, brake hard and expect to lockup, fail to lock the door and it will fly open on a corner and hit a wall at speed and expect a serious fender bender. And if you are not happy with the offending bumper that has disassociated itself with the rest of duco, drive over it and watch it flick out from under your car across the road. The range of cars you can utilise for such activity is also incredibly impressive, with everything from Lamborghinis and

Jaguars to Transit Vans and Lorries shifting into gear at your command.

If, like me, your jaws are only inches away from the pavement, prepare to cop a graze as Reflection Interactive has also implemented Geo-Mod technology. Unload a clip of ammo into a wall and you'll see bullet holes. In fact, pound something hard enough and it will crumble completely. This technology may or may not be important to mission progression, but it is cooler than a Penguin in winter and signifies that Driver 3 will push the genre well beyond gamer's basic desires.

Driver 3 looks like one of 2004's must have titles and if you are unfamiliar with the franchise, give our covermount CD a spin in order to whet your appetite. Reflection Interactive appear to have most bases covered but questions linger over the effect of no multiplayer and whether the controls on foot will be as intuitive as those within the vehicle. Nevertheless, the prognosis for gaming next Easter is sensational and Australian GamePro will be there to let you know how it all turns out.

LEAD DRIVER

Martin Edmondson is the man behind Driver 3. He spoke to GamePro about the work-in-progress.

How long have you been working on Driver 3? Why has it taken so long in production? It depends when you measure the start of the project. We actually started work on the physics engine in July 99, although it was used first in Stuntman. Work commenced on the main game around the end of 2000. It's taken a long time because it's pretty huge and complex. 35,000 individually placed buildings across the 3 cities, 150 miles of drivable road. It also took us much longer than expected to get the results we were looking for out of the PS2 as it's a pretty complex machine to program.

Have there been any particularly tough challenges in the development?

Where to start! Storing and retrieving the cities given their size and the number of buildings - 35,000 buildings and over 100,000 objects. The shadowing system which supports building and car shadows together with self shadowing. Getting the physics engine to cope with the number and complexity of collisions in the world. A world full of cars which are modelled not just in their shell but right down to chassis and subframe.

What are the main changes/additions to the previous two Driver games?

Leaving aside obvious graphical enhancements, Tanner can now exit the car (as he could in Driver 2, of course) and use a range of weapons from single handguns to shoulder held machine guns and pump action shotguns. A considerable amount of damage and destruction can be caused using these!

Also in Driver 3, most of the missions can be tackled in a variety of ways and have multiple solutions. The range of vehicles has increased to include fully articulated trucks, bikes, boats etc. We also have a new 'thrillcam' feature which allows you to take select movie style camera shots of stunts at any point in the game. This is in addition to the familiar 'film director' mode.

What do you see as the 'selling points' for the game that will make it stand out from other driving games and Grand Theft Auto? The realism of the car handling and car dynamics and the level of vehicular destruction. The amount of visible damage that can be created out of the car using your weaponry. The size and detail of the cities. The film director mode which allows you to create and film your own car chases is unique to Driver. The 'ThrillCam' mentioned above, and the filmic nature of the cut scenes, many of which are set to licensed music. Driver isn't really like GTA specifically as it's a principally a car chase simulation.

Any surprises you can reveal?

At various points in the game you get the option to play as alternative characters, including Tanner's partner Tobias Jones!



Just like the streets of downtown Baghdad



Full Spectrum Warrior

Format/s:

XBox

Developer:

Pandemic

Publisher:

THQ

Target release date:

April 04

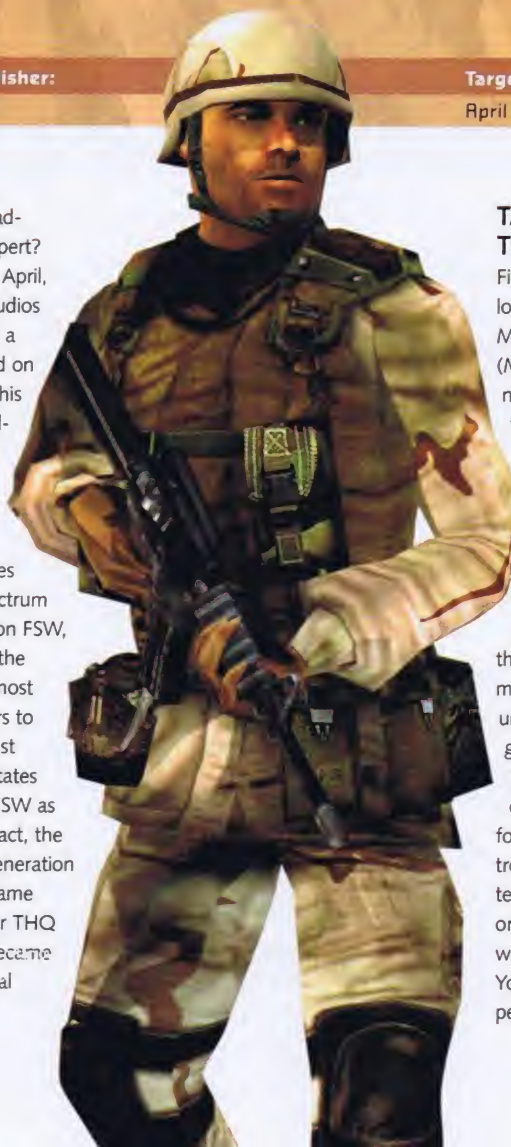
So you're a bad-ass squad-based military game expert? Think again, private. In April, developer Pandemic Studios will release Full Spectrum Warrior, a military team/ tactical game based on the US Army's light infantry. But this is not just another standard squad-based shooting game. No, sir.

TRAINING TOOL

"We want to give the player an authentic Army experience," states William Stahl, director of Full Spectrum Warrior. Stahl has been working on FSW, which was originally planned for the PS2 but is now Xbox-only, for almost three years. The player Stahl refers to in his statement, however, isn't just the average gamer. The United States Army asked Pandemic to create FSW as a virtual trainer for its troops. In fact, the game was conceived as a next-generation trainer first and an entertaining game second. It was only after publisher THQ picked up the license that FSW became a product to be sold to the general public.

TAKING ONE FOR THE TEAM

First and foremost, FSW strictly follows the Army rules and doctrine of Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT). In the game, you control a nine-man squad broken down into two teams (Alpha and Bravo), each with a team leader, rifleman, automatic rifleman, and grenadier. As the team commander, you must move all of your soldiers safely through the dangerous streets while quashing those who stand in your way. The controls handle more like those of a third-person tactical game - you command your troops individually or as a unit using simple button presses. "This game is not PC-primary," says Stahl. "The game was always done on the console. All of the design and work was for the Xbox controller." You can tell a trooper to cover a specific area, have a team move in a two-by-two formation, or have one team give suppressing fire while the other team flanks an enemy. You will not control the game in a first-person perspective as in other popular





You'll have to follow correct Army procedures if you don't want to lose command status



Those skilled in military operations achieve cooperation in a group so that directing the group is like directing a single individual with no other choice.

Sun Tzu, The Art of War

squad-based titles.

"[Today's] squad-based military games are not squad-based," asserts Stahl. "You can be any other unit who is not part of the team - he's just waiting to be moved. Our guys are not like that. They're designed specifically to operate as a team. So when they perform a function, everybody has a certain cog in the wheel that fires at the right time to get that thing done. They're modeled on professional soldiers."

In an early demo of the game, these virtual professional soldiers seemed to act as an authentic team. They automatically took cover when fired upon, gave correct hand signals, aimed their guns only in their fields of view, moved in actual Army-specific formations suitable for their surroundings, and, most importantly, didn't fire a shot until ordered to do so.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Full Spectrum Warrior's attention to team cohesion is further augmented with challenging gameplay to test your leadership skills. As team commander,

you must ensure that your group follows Army procedures, or else your command status falters within the ranks. For example, you might get a call from your superiors not to shoot upon a statue - even though there's an enemy using it as cover - because the object has political significance. But if you still engage the enemy at the statue, your command status lowers, which basically means that commanders lose confidence in you. In return, if later you request air support, command may not give it to you because they feel you're not making effective choices in the field.

At any point in the game, however, you can jump back in at any place previously played, much like a quick reload. So if you do fire upon the statue or if you get troops killed, you can backtrack 15 seconds and issue a different command. But each time you reload, you don't get your command status back - it actually goes down. Conversely, if you pick up an injured soldier and move him to a casualty evacuation site instead of reloading your game, you gain your command status back. "We



The soldiers are designed specifically to act as a team and won't fire unless ordered to do so.

encourage players to do the right thing," says Stahl. "You can reboot all you want to get all of your guys back, but you're not going to be an effective squad leader."

COMBAT READY

The military and retail versions will look and feel almost identical. The only major difference will be that the civilian version will have character personalities that are distinct and will drive a compelling story. Within your team ranks, there will be guys who won't get along; a guy might lose it when bullets start flying, and a guy may be gung-ho. All of these personalities will develop through time, and how you deal with them and how they deal with each other will determine the outcome of the game.

"We're trying to create a game where you play as the guys from films like *Band of Brothers* and *Saving Private Ryan*," explains Stahl. "Our Holy Grail is playing the movie."



Fable

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|--------------|------------|----------------------|
| XBox | Big Blue Box | Microsoft | Early 04 |

The PS2 has a firm lock on surreal hyperfantasy role-playing; just look at the Final Fantasy series. In recent months, however, the Xbox has been on an RPG run of its own – first with straight PC ports like Morrowind but now with original masterpieces like Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic. Microsoft's console is becoming the one to own for complex, character-driven, nonlinear gameplay experiences. Due out early 2004, Fable could be the best Xbox RPG to date.

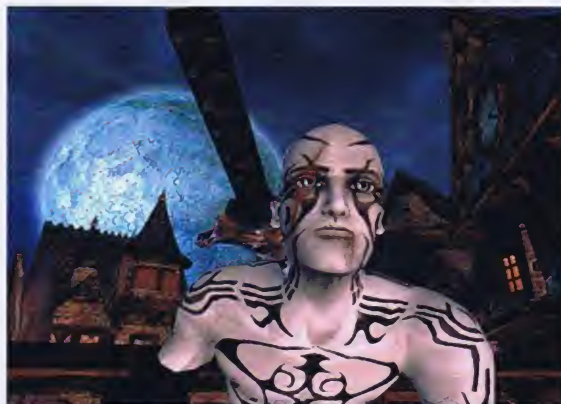
BECOMING A HERO IN 32,768 EASY STEPS

Developed by Big Blue Box Studios (a satellite outfit of Lionhead Studios, makers of Black & White and the upcoming B.C.), Fable is a simple game at heart. As a normal 15-year-old boy in the land of Albion, you return home one evening to find your house ransacked and your family missing. Lusting for revenge, you swear to find out what happened to them – but this is really just a small part of the story. The main goal

of Fable – one you'll discover over the next 30-odd years of game time – is to become the most legendary hero in all of Albion. If you concentrate on nothing but your family, then an enormous part of the game's world will remain undiscovered right up to the very end.

The heart of Fable's gameplay is your hometown's Hero Guild, where you pick up missions, learn new skills, and view your popularity on the public hero rankings. To become a hero in Albion, you've got to build a reputation, and you do this by completing guild missions, trouncing fierce monsters, and generally raising a ruckus. You can accelerate this process by using the town's 'boasting podium' – a place for you (and rival heroes) to sell yourself to the villagers. Play the crowd right, and you'll be treated like a pop idol – kids will start copying your outfits, girls will swoon, and shopkeepers will bring you gifts. Don't live up to your boasting though and you'll be treated like an idiot.

However, there's no rule that says you can't be infamous instead of famous



– depending on your behavior in Fable, the reputation you build can be one for honorable bravery or murderous barbarism. If you get a reputation for being a psychopath, villagers will run away from you, women will hide their daughters, and the barman will let you drink for free because he's too scared to charge you for the mead. You'll become legendary – but for completely different, nefarious reasons.

MARRYING AND BELCHING

In Fable, everything you do – from completing tricky missions to hanging out in town – can affect your appearance and reputation. Swish your sword around a lot, and you'll grow more muscular; concentrate on will (magic) instead, and you'll age quicker than usual, eventually losing your hair and gaining a ghostly white pallor. Your social status



Play the crowd right and you'll be treated like a pop idol – kids will copy you, girls will swoon...

is even a factor in Fable's skill system – while many skills are learned only at the Guild (you trade experience points for them), others (like bowing or making certain facial expressions) are mastered by mimicking the villagers you meet. Belching at the bar can make you a hit with the guys, but do it around young ladies, and you'll very likely remain single all your life. People have long memories in Albion.

The game's real-time combat is simple but effective – much of it is controlled with a single button. There are different attacks and evasive maneuvers available at all times, and you can assign special moves to the controller's buttons in the control menu. The basic moves are context-sensitive but for more complex situations, you can perform special combos and a wealth of will-based spells, including Matrix-like slow motion and Hulk-like physical strength.

GRIMM VISUALS

A tour of Big Blue Box Studios reveals a menagerie of fantastic monsters: nasty giant scorpions, fluttering nymphs, odd-looking zombies, and trolls that stare at you through the screen. It won't look like a Tolkien fantasy though, says Director Ian Lovett. "The model is based more around the works of the brothers Grimm and other dark fairy tales from Europe. People looking for elves, dwarfs, or orcs might be disappointed." Indeed, much of Albion looks like a fantasy



version of medieval Germany – thick black forests, small villages with wooden houses, craggy mountains, and unkempt graveyards are only some of it. The backdrops are enhanced by an astonishing amount of light and shadow effects; the game cycles between day and night, with the sun's position in the sky affecting shadow placement and visibility.

READY, WILLING, AND FABLE

Even after several years of hearing about it, Fable remains one of the most promising role-playing games. After all this time, the game is nearing completion – Big Blue Box Studios has all the individual parts built, and now it's begun the final process of threading them all together. For anyone with more than a passing interest in RPGs, the release date can't come soon enough.

DIRECTOR OF LEGEND

Peter Molyneux, leader of Lionhead Studios, is the producer of Populous, Syndicate, Dungeon Keeper and Black & White. He's been involved in the development of Fable since it began life as Project Ego five years ago.

GAMEPRO: WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT THING ABOUT MAKING FABLE?

Peter Molyneux: The hardest thing to implement is this simulated world. When we were designing Fable, we thought 'Why don't we have it so that you can buy anything you like in the world?' Anything from a box of chocolates, to a sword or some armor, to even a whole house or shop.

We thought this would be a really good idea, but then I was watching someone play the game, and I noticed he was hiding in the bushes – and nothing was happening. He was hiding there for two minutes. I asked him, 'What are you doing?' and he said, 'I'm waiting for the shopkeeper to come out so I can kill him and buy his shop.'

And that's the biggest problem. We've got a simulated world where people can do anything – you can go and kidnap people; you can break into someone's house when they're in bed and steal all the stuff in the house; you can become a thief like that. It means that not only do we have all the quests in a role-playing game, but we also have the unique problems of people trying to experiment within the world.

GP: WHAT WILL THE MULTIPLAYER MODE BE LIKE?

PM: We have the ability in Fable to play up to four people on one machine cooperatively. If you're playing Fable at home, you can take your memory card over to your friend's, plug it in, and your character gets imported into the new world. He becomes what's called the 'alter ego' of the main character. As an alter ego, you're a sort of ghost – you can fight monsters, pick up experience, and heal the main character. The more you do that, the more of score you get, and the more score you have, the more likelihood there is that you can take over as the main hero. So it's very cooperative, but also a little bit competitive. I think it's quite unique, and the tests we've done so far have been quite interesting.

GP: CAN YOU PLAY FABLE ON XBOX LIVE?

PM: Well, Fable was started 5 years ago, before there was any talk of Xbox Live, or even the Xbox. So we haven't currently got plans for it.

GP: WILL FABLE BE XBOX-EXCLUSIVE, OR COULD THERE BE A PORT LATER ON?

PM: Currently, we are thinking of possibly one other format, and it's not a console (smiles). That's all I can say, but you should be able to figure out what that is. But for the moment, it's Xbox-exclusive.



Final Fantasy X-2

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| PS2 | Square | EA | February 04 |

The First Final Fantasy sequel, Final Fantasy X-2, picks up a bit after the events of Final Fantasy X, with Yuna teaming up with Rikku and newcomer Paine. Dubbed the Gullwings, their mission is to find several spheres tucked away in various areas of Spira.

Activities range from exploring dungeons and defeating bosses to handing out balloons to promote a rock concert. Final Fantasy X-2's structure is mission-based. From the deck of an airship, you travel around Spira, and the difficulty of each potential mission is displayed at the bottom of the screen. Although you can finish the regular missions (and hence the game) in fairly short order, X-2's real hook is the side quests and extracurricular activities. Thorough exploration not only yields hard-to-find items but also results in nostalgic encounters with familiar faces from FFX. FFX-2 also brings back the Active Time Battle (something missing from FFX), where battles are ongoing and there's no delay

between exchanging blows.

X-2's biggest change over its predecessor is the Garment Grids. As you progress through the game, the trio collects various spheres that enable the girls to cast different spells. The number of Ability Points won after a fight depends on what dress a character is wearing. During battle, you can change costumes on the fly, and there's a new combo system where consecutive hits delivered to a single target inflict massive damage. The menus are intuitive and easy to use (as they were in FFX), and you can skip all the talky scenes with the touch of a button. Interspersed within the action are various high-quality CG sequences, which have become a trademark of Final Fantasy games. Speaking of trademarks, the frequent bonding and posing - more than a coincidental homage to Charlie's Angels - are too excessive. Despite the overly cute cut-scenes and somewhat goofy dialogue, Final Fantasy X-2 has the makings of another immersive and addictive Fantasy.



Words: Major Mike



Square's massively multiplayer installment in the Final Fantasy series may have been out in Japan for a while, but it's coming our way on PS2 and PC within a matter of months. GamePro recently got a chance to tool around with the beta version of this trippy-cool fantasy.

Final Fantasy XI invites you to explore the world of Vana'diel, where you can create your own character from five races: the humanlike Humes, the elflike Elvaan, the small and cute Tarutaru, the Mithra catgirls, and the beefy Galka. As you search the countryside for adventure and magical crystals that enable you to create your own powerful items, you'll also discover new Jobs (as in Final Fantasy Tactics) that give you a chance to further customize your character.

Final Fantasy XI is, in keeping with Final Fantasy tradition, almost completely different from any previous FF game. This sort of originality can be both good and bad because while it's refreshing to play a game with a new premise you've never seen before, the decidedly alien controls and gameplay style in the beta version could make getting into the game quite difficult, even for MMORPG veterans. Given the game's



Words: Dunjin Master



Final Fantasy XI

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| PS2/PC | Square | EA | Early 04 |

lengthy beta stage, however, the controls will likely be smoothed out by launch.

The beta version showed some clear problems with porting the game to the PC from the PS2, the most obvious being that

PS2 graphics look simply horrible on a respectable PC.

The environments looked grainy and jaggy but combat was peppered

with all the requisite Final Fantasy flair, making mindlessly killing stuff more impressive than in most other online RPGs out there.

While the PC multiplayer online RPG market is beginning to look really crowded, FFXI ought to have the name recognition and the hype to put it over the top. FFXI's PC version could give the old standbys a run for their money and, of course, on PS2 it should be quite a breakthrough in console online gaming.

>Tetchy Troll seeks adventurous type for Goblin whipping. No time wasters:-)

You can find MURDOK @Snotspit River, Norrath.

MURDOK

Class: Shaman, Race: Troll

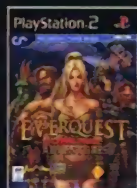
A unique EverQuest online experience available exclusively on PlayStation®2. www.eqqa-game.com



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PlayStation 2
Real opponents. Infinite possibilities.





Lament of Innocence will be one of the more story-driven Castlevania games in the series. Taking place before any of the Castlevania titles, you'll play as the first Belmont vampire killer, Leon. Upon Leon's return from the Crusades, he finds that his girlfriend, Sara, has been kidnapped by Dracula. Renouncing his knighthood, Leon sets out for Dracula's castle and encounters Rinaldo, a weapon master who introduces him to what will become the trademark Belmont weapon: a whip.

Dracula's castle is gigantic, and Lament's play time is approximately the same as Symphony of the Night's. The castle is divided into five areas, each of which has hundreds of rooms and several levels (main floor, basement, etc.) to explore. Some areas are initially inaccessible but can later be reached after Leon learns certain abilities or collects the proper power-up. And, in keeping with Castlevania tradition, a powerful boss awaits at the end of each area. Visually, Lament is gorgeous: Rooms are awash with excellent lighting and atmospheric effects, and gory details such as enemies

Castlevania: Lament of Innocence

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| PS2 | Konami | Atari | Jan 2004 |

meeting their demise as they dissolve into a puddle of blood are a nice touch.

3D Castlevania on the N64 left a bad taste in almost everyone's mouth however, Lament should change that impression. Although this PS2 adventure is 3D, it plays like it's 2D: Attacks are easy to execute, it's easy to target enemies, and characters don't float when they jump. Leon also has dozens of special abilities, and the more you experiment with different button-press combinations, the more likely you are to learn different combo attacks. Another important skill is magic: Leon can block incoming attacks with a gauntlet, and each blow that is successfully blocked is converted to magic energy that can be stored for later use.

In keeping with Castlevania tradition, a powerful boss awaits at the end of each area

CASTLEVANIA TIMELINE

1987
Castlevania (NES)
1988
Castlevania 2 (NES)
1991
Super Castlevania 4 (SNES)
1995
Dracula X (SNES)
1997
Symphony of the Night (PSone)
1999
Castlevania 64 (N64)
2001
Circle of the Moon (GBA)



The game will hopefully fill in the time until the next movie

Mission Impossible: Operation Surma

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| PS2/XBox | Paradigm | Atari | December |

Disappearing off the radar for a year or so has worked wonders for Mission: Impossible: Operation Surma. It's emerged looking like it could be one of the top stealth-action games of the year, much like a Splinter Cell set in the IMF universe. Yup, its potential is that strong. And that said, Surma borrows more than liberally from the standard set by Splinter Cell - IMF agent and main character Ethan Hunt (who in the game looks nothing like Tom Cruise) moves with a very familiar half-crouched prow, and the game makes good use of lighting and shadows for its stealth-

focused gameplay.

Yet Surma is definitely no mere Splinter Cell clone, expanding the genre's hand-to-hand combat with a sharp array of moves and adding the occasional action flourish here and there. Unlike Sam Fisher, Hunt packs much more than a clobbering elbow - he can sneak up behind enemies to snap their neck or lurk in a doorway and clothesline an unsuspecting enemy as they rush through. Of course, he can also force enemies to unlock doors at gunpoint and carry their bodies off to better hiding spots.

Surma definitely puts you behind the trigger more, too. In one level, Hunt uses a sniper rifle to provide cover as an ally emerges from a compound, mowing down a horde of enemies in the process. In another, he dons a rocket jetpack to skydive, avoiding missiles while he struggles to land in a plane.

Surma's story isn't based on the movies or TV shows, but follows a freshly penned tale that pits Hunt against an evil corporation that's using a powerful new computer virus to wreak

Unlike Sam Fisher, Hunt packs more than a clobbering elbow

havoc. The trail will take Hunt from a research facility in the southwestern U.S. to Eastern Europe to a prison in Africa. The visuals already look quite sharp, though the animations and lighting aren't likely to rival Splinter Cell's gold standard.

Words: Air Hendrix



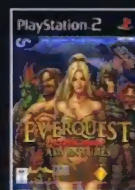
ALAN

Class: Warrior, Race: Barbarian

>Bashful Barbarian seeks fun loving Druid with insatiable thirst for blood;-)

You can find A L A N @Coldwind Hall, Norrath.

A unique EverQuest online experience available exclusively on PlayStation®2. www.eqoa-game.com



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PlayStation 2
Real opponents. Infinite possibilities.



Medal of Honor: Pacific Rim

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| PC | EA | EA | Early 04 |



Missions include rescuing American POWs and staging a raid on the tiny atoll of Makin

Medal of Honor's next tour of duty on the PC looks as impressive as its first. While the acclaimed Medal of Honor: Allied Assault and its two expansion packs, Spearhead and Breakthrough, covered the European theater, Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault takes the action to the other side of the world and it's a completely different game from the console-only Medal of Honor: Rising Sun.

Like Rising Sun, Pacific Assault opens at Pearl Harbor as you take on the role of Marine Private Tom Conlin. 25 missions across seven levels will see him help defend Henderson Field at Guadalcanal and lay siege to Tarawa Island. Other missions include rescuing American POWs and staging a raid on the tiny atoll of Makin. But the adventure all begins at boot camp, a fully interactive level that acts as the training mission and the place where you become friends with the four recurring characters that cycle in and out of Conlin's squad and story line.

While squad action is a big focus in

Pacific Assault, Conlin will tackle some missions solo. Mostly, though, he'll work with a unit of six to eight fellow soldiers. A squad leader will command Conlin and the rest of the unit via hand signals that pop up in the top-right corner, telling you to halt, giving you the location of enemies, and more. The player will never lead, just follow.

Promising developments in the A.I. should also change the flow of battle. Pacific Assault does away with scripted events, so no battle should play the same way twice. The enemy and your squadmates are tanked up with A.I. that provides them with tactics for advancing on a position, handling a banzai charge, and so on. This should put an end to memorizing enemy positions.

The health system also takes an innovative approach. You'll be able to apply a bandage to do some minor healing, but for serious repairs, you'll have to call for a medic. Tactics will then come into play as you must decide whether to fall back and meet the medic halfway or provide cover fire for him.

The graphics are eye-popping stage. The levels are big, open areas on a much larger scale than in the previous game. The environments are lush and lifelike - foliage will flutter in response to shockwaves from grenades and water will splash in response to a volley of bullets. After Call of Duty, Pacific Rim looks like the next big WWII FPS.



Ninja Gaiden

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Target release date: |
|-----------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| Xbox | Team Ninja | Microsoft | Early 04 |

It's been a relatively quiet period for ninja fans, but the calm is about to end. Ninja Gaiden revives Ryu Hayabusa, the classic robe-clad hero from 8-bit days, exclusively for the Xbox. With his entire clan and dear loved one slain, Ryu has understandably lost his usual ninja cool. Motivation this time is pure vengeance, and there will be plenty of evildoers punished before he can rest again.

The core focus of earlier Ninja Gaiden games was challenging, nonstop action, and that hasn't changed in this update.

Developer Team Ninja's Tomonobu Itagaki has stated that his latest creation is "95 percent action and 5 percent puzzle solving," so you won't have to decrypt countless riddles to progress through levels. What you will need, however, are good reflexes since there is only one difficulty setting.

Judging from hands-on time with an early version, the enemies present formidable challenges that require the doling out of massive combos. Enemies often attack in coordinated groups that

call for you to dispatch them in a strategic order. For example, one creature may hover in the air casting binding spells that hamper Ryu's movement so ground forces have an easier time.

Luckily, ninjas are creative creatures. Ryu can launch combos from walls, switch to another target at lightning-quick speeds, and even juggle enemies in the air. He can also combine a wide range of attacks like mixing sword slashes with kicks or projectile weapons. Speaking of which, there are 10 primary weapons like nunchucks and a giant warhammer, and six secondary weapons like bow and arrows, and shurikens. Constant defensive maneuvering and blocking are critical if you want to continue further. This all might sound a bit overwhelming, but it was quite simple to control all of Ryu's moves and combos naturally in the early build.

Words: Tokyo Drifter

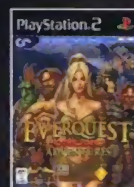


JENNY
Class: Wizard, Race: Gnome

>Happy go lucky Gnome seeks others for encounters in junkyard. Gnome swinging experience preferred:-)

You can find JENNY @Church of Brell, Norrath.

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IMPORTANT: A Network Adapter (Ethernet) for PlayStation-2, memory card and broadband connection is required to play EverQuest Online Adventures. 30 day subscription included. Additional subscription fees applicable thereafter. "PS" and "PlayStation" are registered trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. EverQuest is a registered trademark and Online Adventures is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. ©2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. All Rights Reserved. WL7014 KSP56201



PlayStation 2
Real opponents. Infinite possibilities.

SOCOM II: US Navy SEALs

| Format/s | Developer | Publisher | Target release date |
|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| PS2 | Zipper | Sony | January 2004 |

Set to start their new mission early in 2004, the U.S. Navy SEALs will once again show off their raw and focused talent on- and offline, promising even more action than in the first SOCOM game. To start, there will be 12 brand-new single-player missions that take place in the hostile environments of Albania, Algeria, Brazil, and Russia. Your equipment will be updated to include shotguns, rocket launchers, and antipersonnel mines. And as in real special operations, you can expect to team up with and take control of another country's elite military group like the British SAS and Russian Spetznas to help complete your missions.

Multiplayer gaming, however, is where Sony is really pushing SEALs operations as SOCOM is clearly the number-one played PlayStation 2 online

game. The sequel will build on this success with added features like player and clan rankings, friend lists, spectator modes, stat listings, and an improved chat system. An early demo version of SOCOM II that GamePro tested displayed super-fast action online and clear improvement of visual detail. If you're not already, get prepared to gladly get your feet wet with the second invasion of US Navy SEALs.



Words: Four-eyed Dragon

The Sims 2

| Format/s | Developer | Publisher | Target release date |
|----------|-----------|-----------|---------------------|
| PC | Maxis | EA | Early 2004 |



When your Sims procreate, the child will look like a genetic mix of its parents

Perennial PC Top-10 dweller The Sims and its army of expansion packs are getting a huge upgrade for the sequel. The first thing you'll notice is the spiffier graphics, but that's not nearly everything that's new. When you create your Sims, you'll have tons of options for a total of over a majillion possible combinations, and this time, when your Sims procreate, the child will look like a genetic mix of its parents. Not only is this super-cool, it will be an important aspect of the game since your Sims now grow old and die, leaving their possessions and problems to the next generation. The Sims are smarter and more aware, now, too - they no longer ignore it if their spouse smooches it up with someone else, and a Sim with a bad childhood could grow up lazy and fat, meaning other Sims might shun him, cutting down on his likelihood for hot-tub festivities. Guaranteed to be huge.



Words: Four-eyed Dragon



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HERE COMES THE SUN

Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand, the first Game Boy Advance title from the creator of the Metal Gear Solid series, may succeed where all other games have failed: making pasty-white gamers get out in the sun a little more often.

hideo Kojima, like lots of successful video-game designers, has a problem: The popularity of his seminal work is keeping him from working on new ideas. "I've always been telling people that I want to make strange new games," he said in a recent interview with GamePro, "but there's the Metal Gear series to think about, and that ends up taking priority." Fortunately, the designer had a little spare time after Metal Gear Solid 2 wrapped up. Eighteen months later and voila: the debut of Boktai: The Sun Is in Your Hand, a GBA action/RPG, which is coming to Australia early in 2004. It isn't just strange - it's like nothing seen before.

AND I SAY

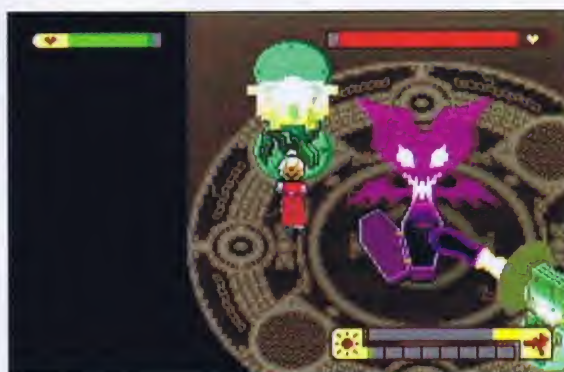
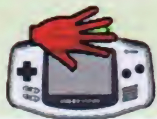
Boktai (short for *Bokura no Taiyo*, or 'Our Sun' in Japanese) comes in a clear GBA cartridge that contains a small photoreceptor - a sensor that detects the strength of whatever sunlight is hitting it. The sensor works by measuring the amount of ultraviolet light that's hitting it directly. Django, the hero, has a gun that's powered by the ultraviolet light picked up by the sensor. Pressing A while outdoors refills the gun's solar power gauge, but it works only if you are playing Boktai outside on a sunny day - it won't work if you're inside because typical indoor lighting doesn't emit ultraviolet energy.

Mind you, this doesn't mean that Boktai must be played outside at all times. You can collect solar capsules to refill your gun energy (as in any decent action/RPG), and the game is littered with solar banks that store solar power for use when it's dark outside. However, there's one area of Boktai that absolutely requires at least a little sunlight: the boss battles. To defeat an undead dungeon master, you must reduce his energy to nil and drag his coffin outside, where you can then use the sun to reduce the demon to ashes. The game is divided into several of



SOLAR SENSOR SETTING

Press the **A Button** while preventing sunlight from hitting the solar sensor on the top of the cartridge.



these dungeons, each filled with puzzles, treasure, and enemies that Django can slink past, Solid Snake - style, if he's short on gunpower.

IT'S ALL RIGHT

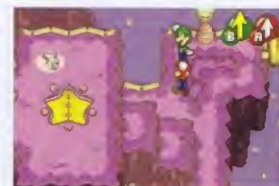
As Kojima puts it, the hardest part of getting Boktai to work isn't the sensor itself but all the fine-tuning it requires. "We're running field tests all across Japan and North America," he said. "With some places, like London with its fog and everything, there isn't enough sunlight in the day to make for much of a game, so we have to bump up the sensitivity a little based on the region." As a result, before you start a new game, you're asked to input the general region of the world you

live in - if you're down in Hobart, then it will be easier to fill up the sensor's gauge than if you're up in Darwin.

The best part about the preview version of Boktai is all the little extras that you'd never notice unless you treat the game's premise seriously. Some areas of Boktai's world are only accessible during certain times or weather conditions, and the strategy you choose for conquering a dungeon can change dramatically if you have the sun on your side. Playing outside all day doesn't necessarily make things easier, though - some enemies hide from you when the sun's too bright!

Boktai looks extremely innovative and exciting, so stay tuned to GamePro for more info before it's April 2004 launch.

Words: Star Dingo



Mario & Luigi

Previewer: Stephen Farrelly

Format/s:
GameBoy Advance

Developer:
Nintendo

Publisher:
Nintendo

Release date:
Dec 03

If you were one of the lucky people in Australia who got to play Paper Mario on the N64, then you'll definitely want to look out for Mario & Luigi on GBA. The game borrows the same art direction as the N64 RPG classic, and in keeping with good design, also plays as an RPG, replete with a very similar battle interface that allows you to make more powerful attacks through a real-time idea that will have you pressing certain buttons at exactly the right moment. Battles aren't random either. Like Paper Mario, you can clearly see your enemy on the world map and avoid or engage at will.

The gist is simple, as Mario and Luigi, players are teleported to a parallel Mushroom Kingdom at the hands of one very evil witch, in the new land, things

aren't always what they seem, and it's up to the brothers to work together, in unison, to save Princess Peach (duh), defeat the witch, and get back to the Mushroom Kingdom.

With the team work factor in place, players will control both characters on screen at once, where one character leads and another follows. A hot swapping interface will allow you to change the lead character and both the A and B buttons act as the individual character's jump. This adds an interesting element to the game, and you can certainly believe Nintendo has some excellent puzzles lined up to take advantage of this idea. Mario & Luigi is due out before Christmas, and while Nintendo hardly ever get games for their mascot character wrong, stay tuned for a full review next issue.



Sword of Mana

Previewer: Stephen Farrelly

Format/s:
GameBoy Advance

Developer:
Square

Publisher:
Nintendo

Release date:
Dec 03



If you look at the classic games for the SNES, the list is long and varied. However, if you were to look at the games that defined a generation of gaming on that console, the list is very small and selective. Secret of Mana is a game on that list, and in the eyes of many fans, a game that has withstood the test of time as one of the greatest adventures to ever grace a console.

As the GBA is 'port anything' heaven, it would be silly not to bring such a classic to the world of portable gaming. As such, through their renewed partnership with Square, Nintendo is proudly bringing Secret of Mana to the GBA under the guise of Sword of Mana; slightly different, and even a little bit new, but a stunning game nonetheless.

The reason the game is a little different is because of the actual steps in the Mana franchise. Secret of Mana was the second game in the series, the first was actually released on the Game Boy. There

was also a follow-up to Secret of Mana that was released on the SNES. The thing is, these games, aside from Secret of Mana, never saw the light of day outside of Japan, which is why Sword of Mana is so exciting. Sword comes before Secret of Mana, but hints at the franchise being started anew on the GBA, something RPG fans should be very happy to hear.

The Mana series is most famous for its non turn-based approach to gameplay. Instead, like the Legend of Zelda series, battles are fought in complete real-time, with you swinging your sword two and fro. But the RPG formula remains intact with the Sword of Mana as you'll build your party as you progress, and these characters will follow you on screen and interact with you in numerous (and often humorous) ways. Sword of Mana is due out just before Christmas in Australia and should light the GBA community on fire. Be sure to look out for GamePro's review next issue.



E-READING FUN

The e-Reader, a new GBA peripheral, offers players the chance to enhance their gaming experience with a unique card swiping initiative that can add many features to a number of games, as well as offering classic old games

(like Donkey Kong, above) with a mere swipe.

Connecting the device to your GBA is simple, and while it's bulky, the compensation is the additions to gameplay for games like Animal Crossing and Super Mario

Advance 4. Collecting cards is easy (they're cheap at only \$9.95 a pack) and an amazing amount of information can be tracked to the magnetic strip, opening up a world of upgrade possibilities. E-Reader is available now for \$79.95.



FALCON AND SAMUS SITTING IN A TREE...

With the recent release of the insanely fun and fast F-Zero for GameCube, plus the successful of Metroid Prime and Metroid Fusion earlier this year, Nintendo has reversed their 'no sequels' policy to add more chapters of play to these exciting franchises. Metroid: Zero Mission (above) for GBA is due out early next year and is essentially a port of the original Metroid on the NES, only with a much more powerful graphics engine employing full parallax scrolling as well as transparencies more detailed sprites and crisper animation. There is also a hint at the game offering much more in the Samus story arc of things, though only time will tell.

F-Zero: Legend of Falcon is going to be based around the cartoon series of the same name that will air in Japan very soon (fingers crossed we see a Western release). The game will feature an in-depth story mode as well as the usual racing options, there is also heavy rumour that the e-Reader will play a big part in unlocking and adding featured to the game. The GameCube may offer even more connectivity (what at this stage, we can't imagine). F-Zero: Legend of Falcon is also due out in the early part of 2004, so stay tuned for more information on these two exciting developments.

TANTALUS: HOME GROWN GAMES

Top Gear Rally (reviewed opposite) was developed by Tantalus, a games maker based in Melbourne. GamePro spoke to Tom Crago.



What other GBA games have Tantalus made?

Tantalus has been around since 1994 and we've actually made at least one game for every major console since the SNES.

TG Rally is our fifth game for GBA. Our first title was

ATV Quad Power Racing, which was an off-road racing game. Next came Woody Woodpecker in Crazy Castle 5, a platformer game, then Monster Truck Madness, which has just been released. We've also completed another platformer The Flintstones: Dino to the Rescue, which will come out next year. In addition to that, we're working at present on another three GBA titles. So we've actually managed to achieve quite a lot since the release of the GBA hardware.

How long did TG Rally on GBA take to make? How many people worked on it?

In all, TG Rally took well over a year to develop. Around ten people worked on the game, from artists to programmers, designers, sound engineers and testers. And of course the producer, John Szoke, who has probably the hardest job of all in bringing all these different elements together.

Were there any particularly tough challenges in the development?

We really set out to break new ground with this game, and when you set the bar that high you're bound to run into some challenges. One area we really focused on was the hill climbing tracks. Up until now with handheld games the player has never really had a sense of 'getting off the ground' or being able to climb up around a track in the way that drivers do in real life. We wanted to change that in TG Rally. We basically set ourselves a set of very tough objectives with this game, and then went about developing the technology to achieve our goals.

What are you most proud of in Top Gear Rally GBA?

We think TG Rally is the deepest, most detailed, and most realistic driving game on the GBA. We've also included a whole host of game modes that will take many, many hours to complete. So we're proud of the depth of gameplay, proud of the graphics, but most of all proud of the fact that we've been able to achieve so much on the GBA.

Are there any advantages/disadvantages of making games in Australia?

The obvious disadvantage is that we're a long way away from Europe, America and Japan, traditionally considered to be the centers of the video game world. That can be hard, and it means we have to do a lot of travel. There are advantages though. We have an incredible talent base here in Australia, and we have a great game development community. Our schools and universities produce first-rate artists and programmers, and we're fortunate to be among a group of other really talented development studios. We also get to enjoy the great weather and Australian lifestyle!

Top Gear Rally

Reviewer: Stephen Farrelly

Format/s:
GameBoy Advance

Developer:
Kemco/Tantalus

Publisher:
Nintendo

Classification:
G

Price:
\$69.95



PROTIP: TG Rally isn't an 'accelerate only' game, precision driving is needed to conquer the courses on hand, so use your car's physics and handling to your advantage.

When the GBA was first unveiled it ushered with it a drive to push the boundaries of its limitations. Within the first few months of the machine's availability a number of visually ground-breaking games surfaced, including Rayman, GT Advance and Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 2.

Now, some two years later, developers are still finding ways to elevate the GBA's potential, and in the driving department, Kemco and Tantalus games have been hard at work to create the ultimate portable rally experience. While Colin McRae and V-Rally have their cards impressively displayed on the table, the level of polish and ability that has been delivered with Kemco's rally product, Top Gear Rally, is nothing short of amazing. The game, as it stands, is light years ahead of anything else being developed in the field for Game Boy Advance, it's simply that good.

Every car in the game is made up of an impressive number of polygons, all sporting detailed and colourful textures. The Mode 7 environmental engine thrusts believable rally courses into your hands and the addition of multi-range level design (i.e. hills, crescents and ditches) adds a deep and enriching coat of polish to an already shiny game. TG Rally is simply breathtaking and the game handles like a dream - never slowing down - and conveys a sense of speed that has been sorely lacking from all other racing games on the handheld thus far.



PROTIP: Always check the weather conditions before a big race, changing your tyres can mean the difference between first and sixth!



VERDICT

TG Rally is a unique racing experience that truly delivers rally driving into the palm of your hand. **PROS** Stunning visuals. Slick presentation. Deeply rewarding gameplay. **CONS** Repetitive music. Aggressive AI. A long time to advance to new rounds.

SCORE
8.0

From the outset, it's highly apparent that TG Rally is a slick product, with an impressive presentation that rivals even the menu interfaces of most home console racing games available today. You can compete in a Championship that will take you through an Amateur and Professional league before you're good enough to take on the World Series, but if that's not your cup of tea, the game offers a deep Time Trial race mode as well as a number of other options including a Garage for updating your car's settings, a Quick Race for arcade enthusiasts, and a Practice mode for honing your driving skills. In-game, the depth continues as each track offers up a range of variables

like weather and surface conditions that will affect the handling of your car dramatically, countering these affects is as simple as choosing the right tyres, handling and braking for you. The car physics then go along way to maintaining the simulation aspect of the game, and coupled with the tight controls, helps immerse players into a true rally driving experience.

Top Gear Rally is a perfect racing game for the GBA, it has something for everyone and is easily one of the prettiest games of the genre available on the handheld - a definite must for race fans. The fact that it was made in Australia just adds to the excitement!

NOKIA GETS N-GAGED

From the people that brought you the infamous Snake game, comes the Swiss Army knife of portable gaming gadgets. By Mike Wilcox

Described by its creator as a mobile game deck, this all new hybrid phone and wireless ready gaming device is Nokia's first nervous step into the extremely competitive world of video games. On the outside, the N-Gage bares a vague resemblance to Nintendo's Game Boy Advance in both shape and size, with a similar multi-directional rocker on the left, and action buttons on the right. While two main buttons are slightly raised for gaming ease, some extra effort is required to master the deck's other buttons in the absence of traditional shoulder buttons.

The remaining front panel buttons are either phone related or offer access to additional key features, including a digital music player with MP3/AAC support, an FM radio, plus a host of smartphone features such as enhanced text messaging, email, web browsing, video streaming, and standard personal management features. The deck's lean screen is a 176 x 208 pixel backlit colour LCD. It's a touch on the small side, plus its height may not be ideal in all gaming situations, but the images are crisp and bright.

Nokia claims (and we agree) that the strongest feature going for the N-Gage is its wireless multiplayer gaming. Using Bluetooth technology, up to 4 people can enjoy hassle-free real time multiplayer gaming within a 30 foot radius. The second wireless option is via GPRS (General Packet Radio Service), however this feature attracts a fee for data sent and received. Real time multiplayer options are not yet available in this mode, so the main benefit right now is connecting to N-Gage Arena and accessing additional game content such as walk-throughs, cheats and posting high scores.

Some key developers have already signed up to make games, including Eidos, Ubisoft, Activision, Sega, Taito, THQ, and EA. At launch, the 10 titles available included Tomb Raider, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, Pandemonium!, SonicN, MLB Slam, MotoGP, Puyo Pop,

Super Monkey Ball, Puzzle Bobble VS, and Virtua Tennis, all priced between \$59.95 to \$69.95. Nokia expects there to be 20 N-Gage titles by Christmas, and roughly 100 available in 2004. Some hotly anticipated titles on the horizon include Red Faction, Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon, Sega Rally, and Nokia's own Pathway to Glory.

While it's a great move to ship these games on handy MMC (MultiMediaCard), why a simple slot in the side of the deck was not considered to actually insert them in is truly mystifying. Instead, the back cover must be removed as well as the battery, before accessing the MMC slot. This sucks. It is worth noting, that N-Gagers can also download and play games to suit Series 60 phones, which are definitely cheaper, but also basic.

Nokia faces a unique challenge with the deck's pricing structure, which unsurprisingly follows mobile phones rather than traditional gaming hardware. The unit can be purchased outright for \$599, or alternatively at around a quarter of that price after signing up for a typical long term mobile plan. While this scenario

produces some flexible options for some users, it will no doubt prove confusing for others.

Fortunately it's not nearly as hard deciding where to get your hands on an N-Gage, as not just video game outlets stock them, but so do many of the big electrical stores, and phone shops around the country. Maybe just don't grill the store manager about which is the best weapon to use in Red Faction.

VERDICT

So is this all singing, all talking, and all wireless gaming device the ultimate go-go gadget for gamers? Opinions definitely differ. If you have no real need for all the other N-Gage features why would you want to pay a premium just for multiplayer wireless gaming? Others will see the value in a wireless gaming device that also does away with their mobile, MP3 player, PDA, and radio. Design kinks aside, and forgetting for a second how naff it looks making a phone call, the N-Gage has some powerful features and encouraging lineup of games (albeit ones we've already played on other systems). Whether it will succeed in the cut-throat world of video games is another question entirely.

Why a simple slot in the side of the deck was not considered is truly mystifying





REVIEW Pandemonium!

This N-gage launch title originally surfaced on PlayStation, and like others that have also made the small screen transition, looks remarkably similar to the medieval original. The game offers the choice to play as either of the two stars, Nikki or Fergus who bounce and cartwheel their way through colourful 2½ D levels filled with the usual obstacles, enemies, and collectables. Where the game comes alive are the wireless options. Challenge a friend locally over Bluetooth, or hit the N-Gage Arena and try posting the best shadow race time for a spot on the global leaderboard. A worthy return to form for this fun platformer.

VERDICT: 7.5



REVIEW Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

It's clear that if you can load a game on it, Tony Hawk wants in. This is arguably the smoothest looking N-Gage launch title, and yet another early PlayStation hit successfully racked ready for Nokia's game deck. Inside players will also find an exclusively designed career mode. However the game really lets loose with Bluetooth options, featuring 5 unique 2-player modes, as well as the ability to upload movies of your hottest moves to N-Gage Arena for all to admire. Mr.Hawk, you've done it again. **VERDICT: 9.0**



PREVIEW Red Faction Every platform must to have a first-person shooter, and N-Gagers will soon be treated to a specially redesigned version of Red Faction. Once again in the roll of disgruntled miner, the game takes you on an anti-Ultor corporation killing spree. Prepare to blow holes in just about everything across land, sea, and air based levels, though unfortunately minus that groovy Geo-Mod feature. To aid in the escape from Mars there will be 12 different weapons. With a 2 player deathmatch mode available over Bluetooth, it's no wonder this is one the most anticipated N-Gage releases.

REVIEW Tomb Raider

It's been a busy year for Miss Croft, what with a box office sequel, a PS2 debut, and now her second PSX adventure has made its way into the wireless gaming world. For better or worse, players will relive the often frustrating puzzles requiring pin point accurate jumps and turns as they explore the depths of ancient ruins. The adventure is enhanced thanks to additional levels, and N-Gage Arena activities, including shadow racing allowing you to download and compete against another player's shadow. Help is also just a download away for those after hints on hidden locations, and video walkthroughs. Watch in amazement as the full PlayStation game comes back to life in the palm of your hands. **VERDICT: 8.0**



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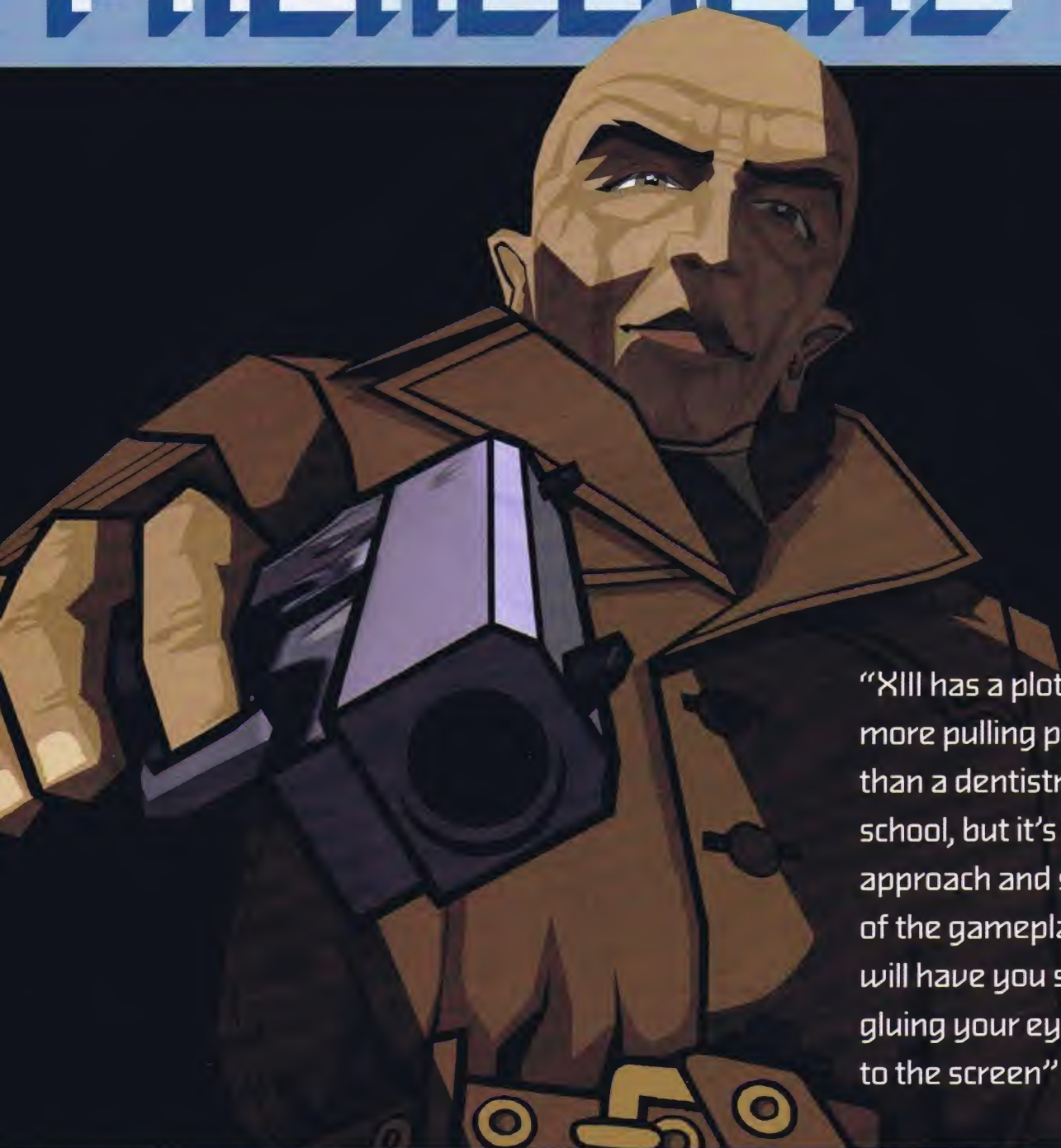
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PRELIVES



"XIII has a plot with more pulling power than a dentistry school, but it's the approach and style of the gameplay that will have you super-gluing your eyeballs to the screen" pg 66

GAME OVERLOAD...

The two months before Christmas is easily the busiest period of the year for game releases and 2003 has proved more crowded than ever. There's always too much to choose from, so let Australian GamePro help you decide. Our first issue is packed full of winners - there's something to please every taste...



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CLASSIFICATIONS

G: A game rated G has nothing in it that will offend or disturb anyone.
G8: A game rated G8+ might be a bit much for the very youngest of players.
M: A game rated M contains violence which may disturb younger players.
MA15+: A game rated MA15+ contains explicit violence and perhaps swearing.
R18+: Australia currently does not have an adult category for games - any game that goes beyond MA15+ is refused classification (i.e. banned)

HOW THE SCORE WORKS

VERDICT

A good Simpson's game? Believe it or not the loyal followers of this brilliant series have a game actually worth a few quarters.

PROS Funnier than a three second fart. Plenty of depth, excellent characters.

CONS Dodgy controls. Repetitive missions. Multiplayer must be unlocked.

SCORE **8.0**

The bit in bold sums up what we thought of the game - if you're lazy you don't even need to read the whole review!

The good stuff

The not-so-good stuff or areas the developers could work on for the sequel

A score out of 10. Any game that scores over 8 is definitely worth a play. Under 5 and you should only play it with a gun to your head.

OUR ALL AUSTRALIAN TEAM OF EXPERTS



STUART CLARKE

Stuart has been playing games for far too long - he should know better by now. He's launched several magazines and was Games Editor for Sydney Morning Herald for over three years.



CHRIS STEAD

You may recognize Chris from other Australian game magazines, but his love of gaming actually grew from his love of writing. Chris also writes poetry and film scripts.



JASON HILL

Jason has been reviewing games for over a decade and has written about thousands of games for a variety of publications including The Age, Herald Sun and TV Week.



MIKE WILCOX

Mike Wilcox will be familiar to all those who listen to the Triple J radio network. Don't let the photo fool you - he didn't lose his edge when he lost his long hair.



DAVID KVASNICKA

David is a bit of an online gaming addict and is studying for a media degree at university. One of Australia's freshest games writers.



STEPHEN FARRELLY

Stephen is a Nintendo freak and used to edit the now defunct Nintendo Gamer. Now he'll be doing all things Nintendo for Australian GamePro.



Gandalf the White can throw spears as well as spells

PROTIP: Completing a mission rarely requires you to defeat all the enemies, so never race headlong into a horde of well armed Orcs as this approach will reap no rewards. Instead, note the level objective, such as Gandalf's courtyard level where you must aid the escape of 200 women, and focus on completing that.

Lord of the Rings: Return of the King

Reviewer: Chris Stead

On the 26th of December 2003 the journey of the One Ring will reach its cinematic climax, but this will represent only one component of summer's Tolkien experience. Set your faces to stun because EA have crafted a movie to video game crossover that is simply phenomenal. Somehow, the scope, enormity and power of the planet's most celebrated trilogy has been squeezed onto a disc and it's ready to twist your living room into an integral part of the fight for MiddleEarth. The claim is you can play the movie and the pay-off is huge with frantic gameplay, supreme graphics and brilliant plot design all bound together by snippets from all three films.

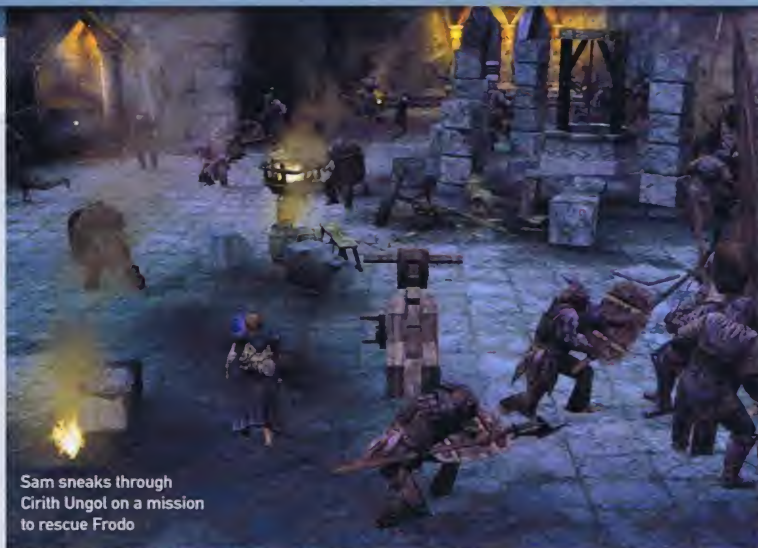
There are some camera complications and some missions are insanely difficult, but this cannot prevent the Return of the King heralding a new era for beat 'em ups and video gaming in general.

ROTK follows three distinct stories and gamers must complete each of these paths to save MiddleEarth from the clutches of Sauron. One path follows Gandalf as he seeks revenge in Isenguard before mounting the defence of Minas Tirith. The second takes Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli through the Path of the Dead all the way to the Black Gate, while the third follows our two 'just best friends, honest' heroes Sam and Frodo out of Osilgath and through Shelob's Lair to the Crack of Doom. If this all went over your head faster than an Elven arrow, you need not fret as ROTK splendidly caters to gamers entering Tolkien's universe on any level. The intros for each of the missions act as a summary of what has proceeded

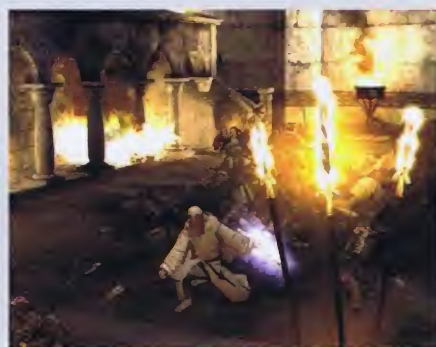
it, with wonderfully crafted montages of all three movies that remind you just how blessed we have been to witness Jackson's extravaganza. To make things more scintillating, these intros segue into the gameplay with such grace that before you know it, it is no longer Viggo Mortenson swinging his sword, but you.

Despite its jaw-dropping artistic flourishes, ROTK remains at its heart a good old beat 'em up, however, even the boundaries of this genre have been tweaked. Each character begins with basic long range, short range and parry attacks, however, with each kill you gain more experience and with enough experience you level up and at the end of each mission you can use this experience to purchase new moves and abilities. Essentially, this unlocks button combos that will result in a new attack in-game. This method of drip-feeding heightened gameplay works well and the upgrades you select will have a direct bearing on how you fare in the following mission. With so many different moves, combat shies away from the button bashing that often plagues this genre, with different enemies requiring different approaches and the crafty AI requiring a high level of strategy on the part of the gamer to be defeated.

Supreme graphics and brilliant plot design, bound together by snippets from all three films.



Sam sneaks through Cirith Ungol on a mission to rescue Frodo



SCINTILLATING SOUND + VISION

The Lord of the Rings movies excelled in the sound and visual departments and it is no surprise to see these elements in scintillating form on our game screens. The levels are stunning with an Oliphant load of animations at hand and scenes so choc full of NPC's that it can make you dizzy in disbelief. There are plenty of cool innovations as well, especially when characters blocking your view become transparent and when you can hurtle a spear through an enemy, only to have him pull it out and battle on. As for the sound, its power could no doubt be measured on the Richter scale, while each voice, from Gollum to Gandalf, is faithfully supplied by the cast. As for how Return of the King the film is shaping up? Simply awesome!

Thus it is with unanimous cheer that the level design more than backs up this gameplay. ROTK is literally riddled with sections that will etch their code into the annals of video game lore. Watch gob-smacked as guard towers tumble into the river at Isengard, as you fight Orcs in-between the moving legs of massive Ents, as you try to hold back a massive army at the gates of Minas Tirith or when you enter the ghost filled hall in the Path of the Dead. These are truly breath-taking moments and EA have nailed the atmosphere, giving such a frantic pace to the battles that you don't dare to blink.

It is not all fighting either, with good level interactivity (torches, spears, boiling oil) plus a strong undercurrent of

problem solving and tactical discovery that enriches each mission with extra depth. There are 12 missions to complete along with unlockable characters (Faramir, Merry and Pippin but unfortunately not Gollum), and DVD-like extras which ensures the experience will last a while.

For all its beauty, ROTK comes at a cost and that price is challenge. Even on easy, ROTK is very hard and as such, it may end up alienating mainstream gamers. Often you will reach a point where you believe you have conquered a level only to have the bar continually raised mid-mission. Progression is a lot easier with a mate on co-op and this does provide a new lease of life for ROTK as a party game.

With such challenging gameplay, an excellent camera system was essential and while it is intuitive and graceful, it also can be frustrating. At times it glides around you with the skill of a master director but at other times you desperately wish to see more of your surroundings. With so much going on, enemies will appear constantly in your blind-spot and sometimes your sprite can get so lost amongst the enemy that you just keep swinging your sword and hope you come out the other side. This

issue is heightened by the intensity of the challenge and represents one trapping of the third-person beat 'em up genre that EA were unable to escape.

It has a few flaws, but ROTK represents a new watermark for video games. Sleek, absorbing, epic, multi-dimensional and boundary pushing, it takes an Ent-like step for a maligned genre while raising the bar on what video gaming can achieve. Not only is it the best ever game based on a movie license, it's also the best beat 'em up in history.

VERDICT

A momentous achievement in video gaming that simply blows away anything you have seen before. However, some patience and dedication are required to reap ROTK's rewards.

PROS Enormous depth. Breathtaking presentation. A key moment in entertainment.

CONS Extraordinarily difficult in parts. The camera poses some issues. A few more levels would have been nice.

SCORE

10



XIII

Reviewer: Chris Stead

Could the number 13 be the most important number known to man? There are 13 hearts in a deck of cards, 13 players on a Rugby League team and 13 people at the Last Supper. It's a Fibonacci number, it's prime and it is considered so unlucky, that you can actually be diagnosed with a fear of it, Triskaidekaphobia. However, in this case, 13 represents the latest title from Ubi Soft and any misgivings or superstitions you may have regarding this fateful number should be immediately vanquished. XIII is blinding entertainment, combining an intriguing plot with supreme graphical flair, plenty of action and enough style to out-funk three John Travoltas. Aside from a few

small interface issues and occasional leaps in logic, this is one of the must-have titles of Christmas 2003.

XIII began life in 1984 as a popular French-language comic book created by Jean Van Hamme. Well ahead of its time, the futuristic plot involving an amnesiac stuck in the middle of a government conspiracy was always ripe for a videogame or even film crossover. XIII begins when our hero comes to on a beach dazed, confused and carrying nothing but a key to a prestigious bank. Soon after recovering it becomes apparent that he is a target for assassination and thus begins a journey full of twists, turns and intrigue at the highest level as our hero, the 13th conspirator, seeks to understand who he is and the events surrounding him. This story may seem like a cliché, but the game drip-feeds you information in such a way that you

hunger to learn more.

If XIII has a plot with more pulling power than a dentistry school, it is the approach and style of the gameplay that will have gamers super-gluing their eyeballs to their screens. Never has a game nailed the comic book intricacies so well, with glorious cell-shaded graphics, larger than life voice-overs, sound captions and gameplay

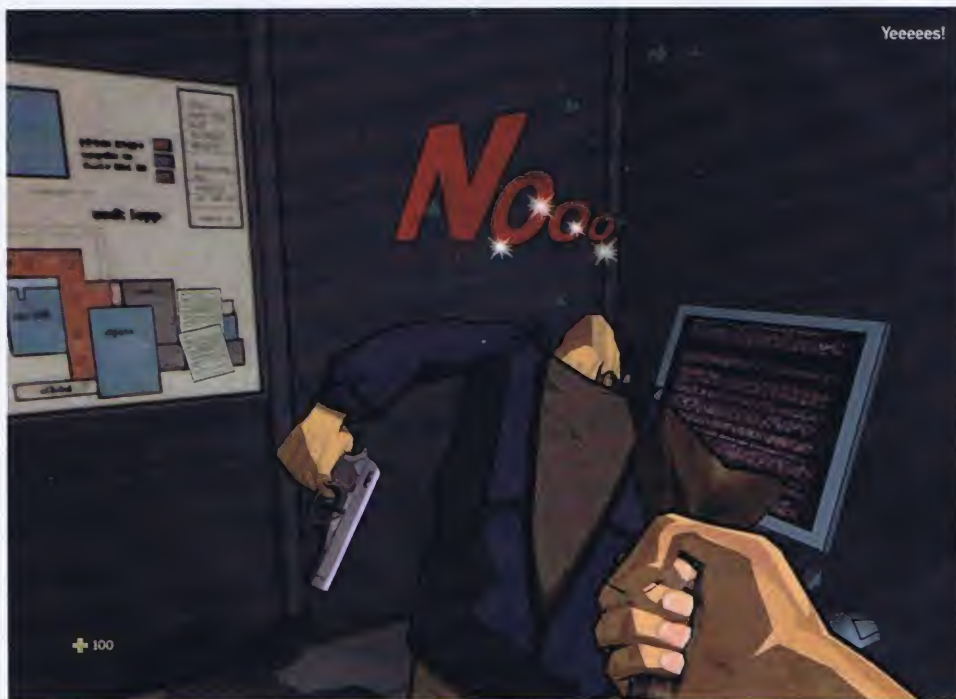


that utilises the boxed out, step by step methodology of the comic medium.

For example, an approaching henchman will be 'heard' by the 'tap, tap, tap' as he walks in your direction and smacking an unsuspecting bank guard over the melon with a chair will result in a satisfying 'whack' caption. It is these little moments that make XIII such a unique and enjoyable experience. Nail a long distance head-shot and you will be rewarded with three graphics depicting the gruesome event or shoot a sniper off a cliff edge and he will fall howling to the ground, all depicted in a little box-out that doesn't hinder the gameplay. With so much going on it can take a little while to get used to the interface,

PROTIP: Like all good FPS, a well aimed headshot is the most efficient way of dispatching the enemy. When sneaking up on unsuspecting prey, take the time to aim and send a projectile right at their head.





but this warped perspective brings a whole new dimension to the FPS genre.

Of course, no FPS is complete without a Rambo-esque arsenal of death diplomacy and in this regard, XIII goes beyond the call of duty. There are 15 weapons to acquire and these range from old faithfuls like the shotgun and Uzi to more spy-related affair such as the sniper rifle, grappling hook, lock pick and crossbow. Being an international man of mystery, our hero is also quite happy to make use of 18 mundane items including chairs, ash-trays, bricks, bottles, shovels and shattered glass. In fact, some levels depend on these non-lethal items. For example, when you infiltrate the hospital and escaping the bank, you cannot kill the staff. This is all implemented with ease, utilising an intuitive and familiar control system that glides through the highly interactive levels with the ease of a rogue curry through a dodgy digestive tract. The only qualm comes in the firing mechanism that is slow to reload and can occasionally stick when firing.

XIII's main game is split into 13 chapters covering 13 worlds and the level design is excellent; both creative and deep. You begin the game battling to save your tanned hide on the beach and you will soon find yourself infiltrating prisons, escaping hospitals and searching snow-filled woods. The levels are highly interactive and you'll

constantly be performing stunts such as using icebergs to cross a freezing river, eavesdropping on conversations while hiding in the ventilation system and escaping a hut in the woods surrounded by many well-armed henchman. Occasionally the action does get bogged-down in a set piece (using an entrenched Gatling gun to hold henchman from a helicopter under repair) or shift too quickly over plot details, but the flaws never last too long.

XIII's greatest success is providing

PROTIP: The levels in XIII are incredibly interactive so make sure you check cupboards and lockers for extra health and ammunition.



MULTI-PLAY - On Screen or Online

With such a wonderfully sexy single player adventure, gamers would've been happy to play with themselves, but Ubisoft has also included an above average multiplayer constituent. Be it Deathmatch, Team Deathmatch, CTF or sabotage (similar to the plant-bomb missions of Counterstrike), the comic world caters for gamers and their bloodthirsty mates. However, the multiplayer component plays a little too slow to meet the needs of staunch Deathmatch purists, despite an intelligent and challenging AI.

YAHOOO!

VERDICT

Forget 007, 0013 is the new spy action hero and he's cooler than a dip in the Atlantic. A must-have if you like comics and plot-driven first-person shooters.

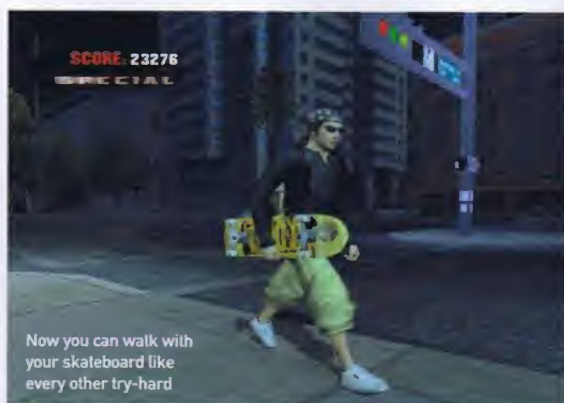
PROS Excellently paced, intriguing plotline. Graphical flair and great level design. Multiplayer ensures it lasts.

CONS Boxouts can get in the way of the action. Occasional firing issues. The multiplayer could've been better.

SCORE 9.5

believable circumstances with logical conclusions that make you feel directly involved. When a grenade lets go in close proximity the screen shakes and when you're trapped in a bank you can use a hostage. Given its comic approach, it is a huge rap for XIII's plot and gameplay that you can totally sink into the atmosphere. Of course, another major reason for this is the excellent graphics. The levels look fantastic with details such as tarpaulins flapping in the wind and birds being scared from bushes evoking a great sense of escapism. This is especially true for the many flashbacks that randomly appear in the game as our heroes memory gradually shifts into gear. At these times the gameplay glides into an interactive ghost world with alternate graphics and SFX. Unfortunately, the quirky boxouts that litter your screen can occasionally block enemies from view during a fire fight. The SFX are spot on too, with David Duchovny, Eve and Adam West on vocal duties and a funky soundtrack ripped straight from the likes of Shaft and Charles Angels. Yep, XIII is a spy-mystery-thriller with enough charm to melt a village of igloos.

XIII is a fantastic success in almost all departments. Surreal, fantastical yet simultaneously realistic, it will allow you to live out your 70's hero dreams while keeping you interested up until the very end.



Tony Hawk's Underground

Reviewer: Stuart Clarke

The Tony Hawk Pro Skater series has been an extraordinary success for developer Neversoft and publisher Activision.

Appearing on all game systems, they've racked up millions in sales and been critically praised for redefining the 'extreme sports' video game.

However, the excitement that greeted the original game five years ago has gradually faded with each release and even though the graphics received a major boost last time around in THPS4, the gameplay remained disappointingly familiar. It had become formulaic – still successful, true – but Neversoft were smart enough to realize that they couldn't keep on milking the same game forever. Goodbye Pro Skater, hello Underground.

While you will meet (and skate as) the pros from previous games (Hawk, Burnquist, Margera and company), the star of Underground is you. The first

thing you do is customize your appearance and while there are some pre-made models, the design possibilities are almost endless and you can even scale and rotate T-shirt logos. PS2 owners who are online have the ultra-cool ability to download their face (or someone else's) and place it on the character.

The amazing thing is, once you've created your highly individualized skater, he or she will appear in every cut scene from then on. That's right, Underground has a story with cut scenes. Without revealing too much, you start out in the grim suburbs of New Jersey and after

learning some skills escape to Manhattan and then other major North American cities, including Vancouver for the Slam City Jam.

Your aim is to get sponsors and rise from unknown to professional, as once pro, you'll get a signature board and shoe (which means money), plus some overseas travel. That means skating Red Square in Moscow and a final level in good old Australia.

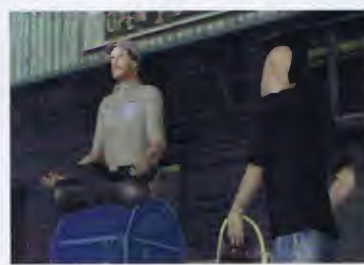
While most of the missions in each level are similar to previous games, there's certainly more variety, including the odd car mission. Yes, you can now

SOUNDS OF THE UNDERGROUND

The soundtrack has always been an integral part of previous Tony Hawk games; the raucous mix of punk, rock and hip hop adds flavour to the on-screen action. This time is no different but, taking a tip from the new storyline, there many tracks from fairly obscure bands alongside the famous names. The notable bands include Jane's Addiction, Jurassic 5, NAS, NoFX, Queens of the Stone Age, The Clash and Kiss, but they're joined by the likes of Superjoint Ritual, Electric Frankenstein, Rubber City Rebels, Dropkick Murphys and the Angry Amputees. But underground or overground – it doesn't matter – this is another choice selection you won't need to turn down.



FACE OFF: The ability for PS2 owners who are online to download their face (or someone else's) and stick it on their character may sound gimmicky but it really does add to the appeal as you're the star of all the cut scenes too!



VERDICT

While not exactly a revolution, this is a much-needed breath of fresh air for the Tony Hawk series. Best skate game yet. **PROS** Customizable appearance that remains through cut scenes. The ability to get off your board. Fast, addictive gameplay and huge array of options. **CONS** Cars don't handle as well as they could. Same style of challenges from previous games. No major boost in graphics.

SCORE 9.5

not only get off your board and walk around but also get into and drive cars (and other vehicles). It's not like Grand Theft Auto as you can't car-jack and the car handling is also not the greatest, but it's a fun addition to the central action.

The ability to get off your board is truly excellent however and you can now position yourself for some sweet lines and climb up on roofs to acid drop down. You can create special moves and in terms of new tricks, the big one is the spine transfer between pipes which is very cool. The control is as tight as we've come to expect from THPS and the action is very fast.

There are an absolute myriad of options, including four levels of difficulty (Too Easy to Sick) and multiplayer on-screen or online for Xbox Live and PS2 Network. 'Create a Park' is better and bigger than ever and apart from importing massive objects like houses, you can now create challenges in your home grown level.

Fans of the Pro Skater games should need no encouragement to check this out, but if you've never played a Tony Hawk game before, Underground is where you should start. Now, more than ever, Hawk is the definitive virtual skateboarding experience.



WHAT DOES OUR EXPERT SAY?

Morgan Campbell is one of Australia's best pro skaters (sponsored by Globe, Juice, Premium and Boost amongst others). He's constantly skating around the world at competitions, demos and, of course, any hot street spots he can find. GamePro asked him

about the impact of the Tony Hawk video games have had on the sport of skateboarding.

MC: I realized that 'Tony Hawk's' was going to have an impact shortly after the release of the first game. It was immediately obvious that the game was going to change the general public's perception of skating. The first demo we did after the release of the game was particularly memorable. Kids were asking us "why are you going so low?" and requesting tricks that had been forgotten for a decade: "Do a christ air mate" or "Hey, whack out a judo air".

The game has allowed certain freaks to progress in a new direction with their skating too. Without Tony Hawk's to take combos to a new level I doubt if PJ Ladd would have done a five-o kickflip back to five-o... That shit is wrong. The major negative effect of the game is that it started a real culture of couch skaters. **GP:** What do you think about the changes for Underground? **MC:** These changes reflect a few of the paths we go through before becoming pro skaters. Just like any form, we have to prove ourselves, take risks and generally feel our way around in the dark for a few years before anything really works out. It's good that you can run around...but to be truly realistic once the character is running around you should have some kind of limp. Most skaters can't run for shit.



Prince of Persia: The Sands of Time

Reviewer: Stuart Clarke

Game players with long memories will remember the joys and frustrations of the original Prince of Persia all too well, especially falling time and time again to a spiked death. While the mid-Nineties sequels never lived up to the first, Jordan Mechner, the designer of the original game is back on-board for Sands of Time. The development team he advised was UbiSoft's Montreal studio, the maker of Splinter Cell – so it's no wonder that the new Prince is very special indeed.

The main part of the game takes place in a huge Persian inspired palace. However, the 'prologue' takes place in another royal compound, with the action starting in spectacularly cinematic style as the Prince, along with his father's

army, invades the treasure-laden palace of the Maharajah. Controls quickly become obvious thanks to on-screen instructions when you come to moves for the first time and soon you'll be doing all sorts of well-animated acrobatics. The first time you pull something off, you'll be rewarded with an impressive slow-motion look at it. While many of the moves appear difficult, jumps are not finely timed and swinging from pole to pole only requires one button press.

You'll soon find a dagger with the power to control time, but tricked by a treacherous vizier you use it to release the dangerous Sands of Time from an ornate hourglass. This all but destroys the kingdom and turns its citizens into demons, so the fate of everyone is now in your hands. Well, not you're not com-

pletely alone, as a beautiful but mysterious women named Farah comes along to aid your quest to defeat the vizier and save your kingdom. Although you are certainly not sure about her motives as she's actually a princess, the daughter of the Maharajah whose palace you and your father attacked. Unfortunately, you don't get to control Farah, and there is no co-operative play.

The main challenge in Sands of Time is in working out how to reach seemingly inaccessible areas using the prince's acrobatic talent. Once you've worked it out, it's generally not very hard doing it. And this is one of the game's main problems – most of it is very easy, except for occasional puzzles and fights that will frustrate the hell out of you.

Your only weapons are a sword and dagger so there's no long-range capability and while it looks cool when the Prince uses his acrobatic skills in combat, it's mostly just bashing away on one button and trying to deal with multiple opponents. Your dagger can come in very handy here, pausing some enemies while you deal with others, but if you take a really nasty blow you can always

PROTIP: Don't forget you can climb poles and leap from them to a ledge or another pole. Keep your sand meter filled by killing enemies so you can rewind time if you make a mistake.



rewind time and try it again.

Yes, that's right. The 'gimmick' in the new incarnation of Prince of Persia is the ability to control time, and it works superbly. It's similar to last year's *Blink: The Time Sweeper* on Xbox but the effect looks and sounds much cooler here. It is also much-needed function, as there will be many times you will fall to your death just in reach of a ledge. Pausing enemies in a multiple confrontation is also essential. Each time you use your rewind though it will take 'sand' from your dagger and you'll need to regularly replenish this by dispatching demons (who disintegrate Buffy-style).

Even though there's a few minor quibbles, *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* is an excellent game sure to please a wide range of game players thanks to slick presentation and easy controls. Some sections of the game are absolutely brilliant, but it's short and most people should finish in about 12-15 hours. There's no multiplayer but there is the original game to unlock so old-timers should be happy and anyone who missed out the first time can see what the fuss was all about.



FIRST PRINCE:

Ahhh, the memories. The classic 1990 game is unlockable in *Sands of Time* so you can relive the joys and frustrations. The first level of the original has also been remade with the sexy new visuals - very cool.

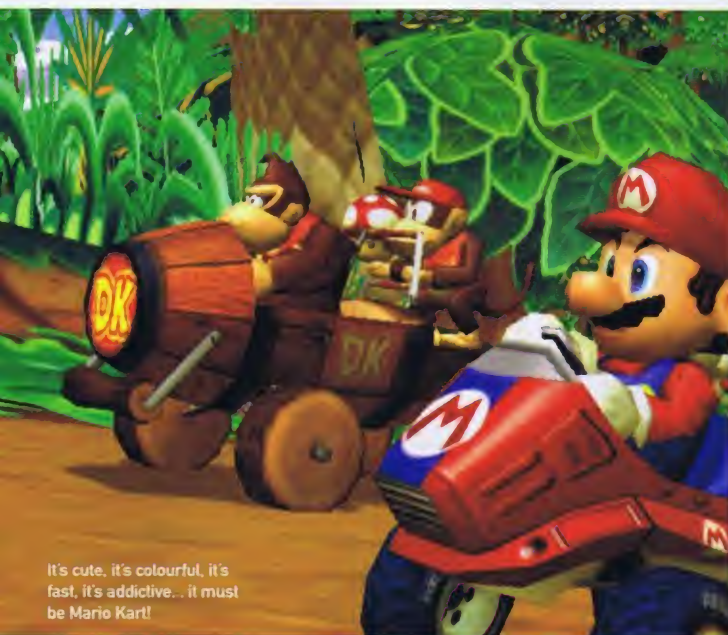
VERDICT

A brilliant update of a classic game with top-notch visuals and sound. Just like the original, there will be frustrations but it's an exciting ride while it lasts. Pity it doesn't last longer...

PROS Fantastic presentation in visuals, sound and story. Rewinding time to erase mistakes is very cool. Unlocking the original game.

CONS Too short. A mix of very easy and frustratingly tough. Combat gets a bit repetitive and annoying.

SCORE **9.0**



It's cute, it's colourful, it's fast, it's addictive... it must be Mario Kart!



The new element in the game is the passenger, who can help out in combat

Nintendo fans have been racing around colourful circuits and hurling turtle shells for over a decade. The Mario Kart games are synonymous with fun. Whether racing or battling against mates, it's tough to stop playing, or laughing. Mario's crazy racer now has two-seater vehicles, but is it double the fun or double trouble?

The game's structure will be instantly familiar. There are Grand Prix, Time Trial and Multiplayer modes, divided into 50, 100 and 150cc categories. In Grand Prix there are four cups to win in each category, each with four unique tracks and eight pairs of combatants.

The character selection screen has many Nintendo favourites. Staples like Mario, Luigi, Yoshi, Bowser, Peach,

Wario's barge arse hanging over the back of the kart is particularly amusing

Donkey Kong and Wario are joined by Baby Mario, Baby Luigi, Koopa, Daisy, Birdo, Paratrooper, Diddy Kong, Bowser Jr and Waluigi. More can be unlocked. Each character has a default kart, but can also jump behind the wheel of similarly sized vehicles. The karts are rated by speed, acceleration and weight. The lightweight choices like the baby's pram have fast acceleration and are good for beginners, while the heavy monsters

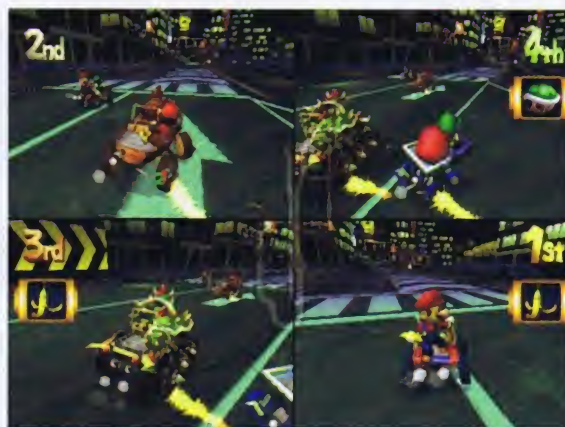
Mario Kart: Double Dash

Reviewer: Jason Hill

like the Donkey Kong barrel or Wario's fabulous pink Cadillac are best left in the hands of capable drivers. Additional karts come after winning tournaments.

The biggest change is being able to choose two characters and switch between them during the race with a flick of the Z trigger. It's a novel and fun addition, and your partner does more than give you a push start. The major effect is being able to stockpile an additional power up, which adds some strategy to the proceedings, especially when you lose them if you get walloped. The passenger also looks great, with Wario's barge arse hanging over the back of the kart being particularly amusing. The passenger is kept busy leaning into corners, holding on for dear life when turbo boosting, hurling projectiles, taunting opponents, juggling items and even trying to swipe power-ups from rivals.

Power-ups are disappointingly familiar, and include banana peels, bouncy green turtle shells, red heat-seeking shells, invincibility stars and lightning





bolts that shrink your opponents. More innovation can be found in the special weapons for each character. A favourite is the baby's massive Chomp Chain, which acts like a brief automatic pilot but also smashes anything in its path. The bad boys have dangerous bombs, Mario hurls fireballs, Yoshi rolls huge eggs, while DK has Coffs Harbour's favourite big banana. Items can be thrown forward or behind but the best power-ups are awarded only to the back markers in the field.

The controls are sublime. Anyone can pick up a joystick and instantly have fun, but beginners taking on a seasoned pro will be dealt a harsh lesson. The secret is using the shoulder buttons to powerslide and waggle the stick to boost out of corners. A turbo start is also a must.

The 16 vibrant tracks, which feature shortcuts, vary in length and complexity. Locations include a gorgeous beach, theme park, desert, haunted house and a terrific cruise liner. One of the most imaginative is DK Mountain with its rolling boulders and huge cannon blast, while the dinosaur park unlocked in the Special Cup is also fabulous. Some circuits have traffic to avoid, and most

have obstacles like kart-eating piranha plants and sharp drops.

Most players will breeze through the 50cc cups, but the 100 and 150cc categories offer a tougher challenge. You'll occasionally suspect cheating when they speed past when you're at full hammer and it's also annoying how the same teams always tend to win during a championship. You need to master the strategic use of power-ups and the art of powersliding. But like previous MK games, single-player mode only has a limited lifespan. Time Trials against a ghost, experimenting with different character combinations, and mirrored tracks won't hold your interest for long after you've bagged all 12 cups. It's the multi-player modes that will keep the disc spinning inside your Cube (see Party Games).

The sense of speed is pleasing, the characters charming and the presentation terrific, but everything in Double Dash takes a back seat to fun. This is typical Nintendo: pure entertainment.



PARTY GAMES

Double Dash is one of the best party games you'll ever play. Up to four can race split-screen, or you can try the co-operative mode which lets players share a kart. Team mates have to work together to switch roles or boost out of corners, but it will be a short-lived novelty, as the passenger has little to do. The adapter lets up to 16 compete (eight teams of two) by linking consoles. The Battle modes are just as fun as racing, with six maps to choose. Balloon Battle has been seen before, with three balloons per player to pop, but two new modes add much merriment. Shine Thief is a manic game of keepings off, while Bob-omb Blast is even more frantic. The only available weapon is bombs and you can collect up to 10. The pleasing twist is that opponents can delete stars through a revenge attack, making scores constantly fluctuate.



PROTIP: The secret of success is the same as for previous Mario Karts. A turbo start is a must, use the shoulder buttons to powerslide and waggle the stick to boost out of corners.



VERDICT

Double characters can't double the fun, but the fourth Mario Kart game is hard to fault. There are few more amusing multiplayer games available.

PROS Easy to play and addictive.

Hilarious multiplayer modes. Gorgeous presentation.

CONS Few new power-ups. Very similar to predecessors. No online play.

SCORE 9.0

The developer of Ratchet & Clank is also responsible for the PlayStation's Spyro games



Ratchet & Clank 2: Locked & Loaded

Reviewer: Mike Wilcox

The easy option for most game developers with just a year between sequels is to slap some new levels together and add a splash of fresh cut scenes. However with Ratchet and Clank 2, Californian based Insomniac Games obviously said 'screw that, lets just give them more of everything, and then some'.

This all new interstellar romp kicks off soon after the first one left off. Our heroic duo are contacted by the head of Megacorp (the biggest corporation in the Bogon galaxy), who lures them into recovering his company's most promising experimental household pet product, the 'Protopet', which has been stolen by a mysterious masked man. Needless to say, Ratchet and his metal mouth buddy

Clank are only too willing to gear up for an all new planet hopping assignment.

EXOTIC LOCALES

Played out over 20 new locations within the Bogon Galaxy, the exotic destinations range from bustling alien metropolises and bug infested jungle terrain, to giant floating space stations and the newly introduced spherical worlds. These small scale planets literally spin around under foot as Ratchet navigates his way across them. They also feature tall antenna platforms which require the aid of high powered jump bases. These unique 3D spheres make for a simple yet refreshing change in game play.

The game's currency is once again bolts and bits, which must be rounded up after destroying enemies as well as

various objects within each level. The more bolts you have, the more there is to spend on new weapons, ammo, and add-ons. Characters throughout the game will offer up new weapons, while Megacorp vending machines scattered around the levels provide ammo top ups. Both come at a price, of course.

ALIEN BUSTING BOOTY

Starring along side the game's dynamic duo is one of the finest casts of weaponry anywhere. This was one of the features that made the first game such a blast as platformers rarely offer such a wide variety of alien busting booty. Some of the new arsenal includes a Visibomb Gun, Mini Nuke, Tesla Claw, Lava Gun, and Chopper. There are 20 weapons to splash out on, plus now there's the chance to upgrade and mod each one to cause more damage, hold more ammo and, in some cases, turn it into a whole new weapon. Upgrades are gained through experience, so the more it's used, the deadlier it becomes. This RPG-style upgrade system also applies to Ratchet. Toasting enemies earns more experience in the form of special

PROTIP: With the new weapons upgrade system, careful planning is required to ensure each weapon is as deadly as possible. By using each weapon regularly, it gains experience and over time this upgrades its powers.



PROTIP: If you've played the original Ratchet and Clank and still have a saved game on a memory card, you can use it to unlock all the original weapons at one of the Megacorp vending machines.



'nanotech' points, allowing Ratchet to withstand more damage as the game progresses.

We can't forget Ratchet's backpack buddy, Clank, who once again transforms into a thrusterpack, hydropack and helipack. Plus, when required to play as the tiny robot, you can now command other robots into battle and to perform other chores.

LAZY EYES

As with the first title, prepare to admire some truly stunning and lively environments. The game runs at a smooth 60fps, with planetary landscapes that roll on as far as the eye can see. The game also supports 16:9 and progressive scan. The control system is identical to the first game, with the addition of strafing. All buttons are put to good use, including a logical weapon selection menu. Something that unfortunately crept back in from the first game is the lazy eye camera. The L1 button does place it back behind the character, but in the heat of battle having to constantly hit this button as often as fire is frustrating.

There's an awful lot of gameplay here. Those that pace themselves through the game will be rewarded with bonus challenges and tasks to complete, cheats, movies, maps, and more. In a world filled with only so-so sequels, this follow up proves more than a worthy successor to the original adventure.

VERDICT

Rather than reinventing itself, this sequel refines what made the original such a standout game. The added touch of RPG elements go along way.

PROS The guns are outrageous fun, the cut scenes have some of the best performances in any game, and the graphics engine shows there's still plenty of life left in the PS2's aging innards.

CONS With the added focus on intense battles, the unresponsive camera often proves trying. Limited checkpoints will also test your patience.

SCORE 9.0

MAXI GAMES

Game elements dubbed maxi games (as opposed to mini games) present themselves throughout the adventure in the form of race events, arena battles and galactic dogfights. The races are the weakest, featuring arcade style weapon based racing similar to Wipeout, only not as good. The gladiator style arena battles set Ratchet up against an endless onslaught of opponents, which makes for ideal weapons training.

The free roaming space shooter is the most rewarding maxi game. A host of weapons and ship upgrades can be purchased, plus you can buy mods to alter the ship's look. Flying in and around asteroid fields and space stations, blasting away waves of enemy ships is almost a full game in itself. All three of these maxi-games can be revisited throughout the game to help top up the all important kitty, as all event wins pay top dollar, or at least bolts.





2003 has been quite a year for Rugby League and it is fitting that the season that dragged the NRL out of its dark age has been rewarded with a videogame simulation. Happily, little known New Zealand developers Sidhe Interactive have conjured a quality product that more than holds its own against the big guns of Accliam (AFL Live) and EA (Rugby 2004). Comprehensive, innovative and most importantly, fun to play, it is only hindered by some mundane animations and poorly detailed players.

This is the first league title in over seven years which amounts to roughly one ice age in games industry speak. It is an officially licensed product and as such, is a thoroughly comprehensive simulation of every cut-out ball, head-high tackle and chip kick known to the sport. There are 35 teams available and 7 modes including; Season, State of Origin, Tests, the English Super League and the World Club challenge (consisting of the top six Aussie and UK teams). Thus, you can play all the stars from home and the has-beens that sought better money on far less sunny shores. On top of this you can create your own players, competitions and teams (right down to their mascots, logos and jerseys). Short of the World Cup, this is Rugby League in its entirety and Sidhe deliver on their promise to envelop the sport in a balls'n'all Tallis-like tackle.

Rugby League

Reviewer: Chris Stead

The game follows the 2003 season with all relevant players and results including new rules such as the 40/20. In an important and often neglected component of sports simulations, if you play through a season, individual stats for each player and team are stored and dynamically shift with each result. This becomes very detailed and includes players' tackle count, number of offloads and kicks in play. Exceedingly impressive

PROTIP: The statistics for each sprite are supplied by the NRL meaning that the abilities of good players are reproduced within the game. This should be taken into account when selecting your team.

This title plays with the pace and fluidity of Darren Lockyer in an open expanse of pasture

and something true League fans will leap to grasp like El Masri plucking a bomb from an attacker's clutches.

The real treat with RL comes in the gameplay. Where its competitors have fallen foul to control technicalities, non-responsive animations and dodgy physics, this title plays with the pace and fluidity of Darren Lockyer in open pasture. In offence the cut-out passes,

fends, side-steps and kicks in general play are intuitive to implement and enjoyable to play. Of particular note are the kicks, as once implemented (be it Grubber, Chip, Bomb, Punt or field goal), the game slides into a Matrix-esq bullet time allowing you to plot the ball's trajectory and weight with ease. This innovative technique works a treat and will have you mimicking the feats of Brent Sherwin and Andrew Johns like a 10 year veteran. Knock-ons and forward passes can occur depending on tackle ferocity and player positioning, plus if you keep your hands free when tackled you can offload the ball.

The defensive aspects of the title do not fare as well, but does fulfil its duties. The main concern comes from the controls as it takes quite a bit of practice to master the tackling technique and to effectively anticipate offensive manoeuvres. Once in control, however, you can evoke some gut-wrenching one or two man tackles that shake the ground like Glen Lazarus, Shane Webke and Willie Mason jumping in unison. The impact of this is made all the more enjoyable by



quick in-game replays that glorify the torrid event. Hit too high, however, and you'll spend ten minutes cooling off in the sheds. It is RL at its ground roots and despite the steeper learning curve of the defensive department there's plenty to enjoy in both singleplayer (5 well implemented difficulties) and multi-player gaming.

The game's graphics are as mixed as the performances of North Queensland. On the one hand, the 25 stadiums, crowd close-ups and game-based animations are excellent, with the crowds directly relating to each game. For example, Souths vs. Manly will draw a smaller crowd than Penrith vs. Brisbane. However, the out-of-game animations (such as the post-try celebrations), weather effects and player sprites aren't as mesmerizing. For example, Steve Menzies does play with his signature headgear and Matt Sing has darkened skin, but that is the extent of the resemblance. The SFX fair better with the thumps and bumps echoing those of a 12 rounds bout with Anthony Mundine, plus the commentary is well supplied

by Channel 9 regular Andrew Voss and leading referee Steve Clark.

RL does not provide Live support on the Xbox or PS2 but its split screen multi-player opportunities make for an entertaining pizza and beer session. This is a direct result of its smooth game physics, but is helped by the dynamic component of the teams and players. Each player has assigned statistics (provided by the NRL) that are reciprocated in-game. For example, players with high aggression readings (like Jason Stevens) are more likely to perform head-highs where speedsters like Nigel Vagana will be hard to catch in open space. There are also interchanges, injuries and a host of hidden extras to unlock (including stadiums, players and videos).

This summer will prove a crowded game arena for winter sport enthusiasts, but RL is the superior title. This is due to innovative ideas and accessible, fluid gameplay, but it does lack the polish and sheen that the opposing big name publishers provide. A few small gripes, but fans and genre lovers will delight in an absorbing simulation.



PROTIP: The big aggressive tackles may look great and be enormous fun to pull off, but they are not always successful. When under pressure, do not risk these big hits and instead utilise the more mundane affair.

VERDICT

An excellent beginning to what will hopefully be a fruitful franchise. It makes up in gameplay what it loses in beauty.

PROS Smooth running gameplay. Good

interpretations of the rules. Head highs.
CONS Animations so-so. Lacks polish and gloss. Players aren't clearly defined.

SCORE

8.0



Need for Speed Underground

Reviewer: Chris Stead

The underground, if you hadn't noticed, has been mainstream for quite some time now. Since the Fast and the Furious and its gravel-voiced anti-hero unearthed car culture in 2001, getting from point A to point B hasn't been quite the same. Listen carefully in the hours of darkness and you'll hear the hiss of turbo splitting the crisp night air, the orgasmic thump of shifting gears and the primeval grunt of raw four-wheeled power howling at the moon. If these sounds represent a typical night out with your mates and the only original part left on your car is the badge, then NFSU is your gaming deity. However, if you're just another Aussie gamer searching for some racing escapism then you would be better suited seeking the likes of Project Gotham 2 or next year's Gran Turismo 4.

Like most cultural funks, underground street racing is 5% accountability, 95% style. From the classy opening intro to the alternative soundtrack (Rod Zombie, BT and Dilated Peoples) and the fashionably clad (well-endowed) sprites you

get the feeling you could complete this game armed with naught but some bling bling and a face full of attitude. You begin with one of 5 factory model cars (including the Honda Civic, Volkswagen Golf and Dodge Neon) and the game progresses by building up your respect, style and cash levels over various events and then using these to upgrade your vehicle. Eventually you will have access to 20 fully modifiable cars to use in competitions such as circuits, drags and tournaments. However, other than trying to get your car featured in a magazine, this represents the gameplay in its entirety. Where is the plotline? Surely a revenge plot or undercover cop story could have justified your rise through the underground ranks.

As it says in the title, the NFS series has always been about satisfying gamers' taste for velocity and this latest instalment delivers in jaw-dropping beauty. When you reach high speeds the camera begins to vibrate and the glittering, fiesta-like environments drift out of focus. At this moment you get

PROTIP: There are plenty of shortcuts throughout NFSU's city and if used properly, they can give you a massive edge in close races. Use your first few attempts on each circuit to suss out these secret paths.



MONEY + STYLE

Like most things in life, the underground streetcar society is all about money and your progress through NFSU relies solidly on this component. The higher the difficulty (which affects traffic and opponent AI), the more cash you earn and this converts into a hotter ride. In the parts shop you can tweak the engine, turbo, nitro, tyres, brakes and more right down to the brand you desire. As for accessorizing your car, you can fully modify the body, rims, paintjob, decals and vinyl to match your fantasies. However, most of these extras must be unlocked first and this is achieved by building up your style meter via busting huge jumps and nailing sweet drifting corners. Be wary, however, as a bad crash or poor driving will, like wearing ugg-boots to the pub, seriously reduce your style.



a true sensation of streetcar racing. Clamp on the turbo and this sensation is heightened again, drilling you back into the lounge and throwing you down the streets of Atlantic City like the Millennium Falcon pounding the Kessel Run. It is truly breathtaking stuff and fans of the franchise will be happy to know that despite the vastly different setting, the feel and control of the cars in NFSU remains faithful to its origins.

NFSU's strength lies in car customisation and level design. As you progress through the game you unlock parts and aesthetics that can be used to tweak your steel-beast into a personalised, unique road weapon. The depth of modifications available (see boxout) is staggering and the end result is very cool. The city itself is a beautifully designed, gorgeous, living metropolis and the individual circuits are a joy to drive with plenty to master including big jumps, tunnels and back alleys. However these circuits also represent NFSU's greatest weakness as genre purists will lament the fact that the main challenge comes from mastering the

traffic and knowing the short cuts rather than from their actual driving ability. Also, as the action takes place in the one environment, it doesn't take long for you to learn its various nuisances, alternate routes and difficult corners, giving you a great sense of déjà vu only a couple of races in. This is compounded by their relative ease as you can power around most of the circuits without even braking. The AI has a good crack at upping

The city itself is a beautifully designed, living metropolis and the circuits are a joy to drive...

the ante, always cutting you off and using its Nitro wisely, but for the ultimate NFSU experience you're better off roping in a mate and exploring the enjoyable multiplayer component (2 player split, 4 player PS2/PC online).

What NFSU lacks in gameplay, it makes up in presentation. The city looks fantastic and as all the action takes place at night, the circuits are surrounded by

PROTIP: Nitro plays an important role in NFSU, but it must be utilized appropriately to be of any affect. Avoid using it in the first couple of laps as opponents may crash or use their nitro in the final moments. At these times the slash you have saved will come in very handy.

VERDICT

NFSU is a gorgeous racer that seeks to capture the style and rush of the underground streetcar movement and succeeds. However, it is not a true racing game and genre purists will be disappointed by its lack of depth.

PROS Looks fantastic. Excellent sensation of speed. Plenty of car modifications.

CONS Circuits too repetitive. No story to follow. Not overly challenging.

SCORE

8.0

so many brightly coloured lights that the amount of radiation pumping into your eyeballs can probably be measured from space. The cars, of course, look great, but strangely they never take on damage. While this makes for a more mainstream friendly and immediately enjoyable experience, it takes away from the challenge as you can literally bump your way around the courses. As for the sound it is awesome. The engines, turbo and burnouts are great, plus there is good attention to detail, such as the sound of the buildings whooshing past at 150 miles per hour. Add an intuitive slo-mo sequence for big jumps and crazy crashes and NFSU is simply a delight to behold.

NFSU is breathtaking entertainment, but it's gone almost as quickly as it came. Holding all the circuits within the one city reduces the lifespan for racing fans because unless you get excited about hotting up your vehicle, NFSU's charm will fade quickly. Plenty of style, stunning to behold and definitely worth a look.


PROTIP:

Strategy is very important in Top Spin. A simple plan that works well against the AI is to continually hit the ball into one corner of your opponent's court. When they are far enough out of play, pound a power hit into the opposite corner and catch them unawares.

VERDICT

TS is videogaming's ultimate tennis simulation with great control, all your favourite stars and a meaty singleplayer mode. However, the lack of polish leaves plenty of room for improvement on what is a solid beginning to a promising franchise.

PROS Great gameplay. Excellent animations. Plenty of single player depth.

CONS No simultaneous multiplayer. A little rough around the edges. Lleyton never yells 'C'mon'

SCORE

8.0

Top Spin

Reviewer: Chris Stead

Tennis has never received the videogame simulation it deserves. For years pretenders have claimed the crown and in a sport that demands peak fitness and superhuman athleticism, a fat plumber has held the trophy in recent times. Enter Top Spin, a lean, mean and licensed tennis machine that captures the sport on eye level. As a simulation, it has no peer. However, while TS wins the Open, it's not a polished performance and you get the feeling a couple of dodgy line calls helped it on its way. Plus, this is niche gaming and unless you are an avid spectator or player of the sport you may feel alienated by its time consuming tournament play and rough edges.

When TS first flickers onto your screen and Aussie rockers The Vines get pumping, you're immediately amped enough to take on the world's best. With Exhibition (singles/doubles, 1-4 players) and Custom Tournament modes you can do just that, but like most sporting simulations, the crux of the game sits in career mode. After giving your sprite a unique look, skills and nationality, you begin armed with naught but some sexy white shorts, a rank of 100 and a racquet. From here you must build your statistics by taking on coaching, gain sponsors by competing in their events and earn cash through tournament victories to finance your rise up the ladder. For tennis fans, TS captures the essence of the sport and gives you the chance to whoop 36 professional asses including Hewitt, Sampras and Hingis. However, a distinct lack of side-games (as found in Tiger Woods) and the need

to play through many long tournaments will alienate the Mario Tennis fraternities.

This is a great shame as TS's gameplay goes deeper than a McEnroe verbal deluge. All your standard shots are there, including Top Spin, Slices, Lobs, Volleys and through the legs shots. There are also power and drop shots that are implemented via the triggers and take great ability to nail, but are game-breakers if delivered successfully. You have supreme control over your sprite and gamers of all levels will be diving around the court and using strategies to beat the opposition in no time. Hey you could even give Anna Kournikova a few wins. The gameplay is aided by an excellent AI that will play big shots under pressure, react to the difficulty setting, up their game when losing, come into the net and serve occasional aces.

It looks great too. The stadiums are fantastic and the animations realistic, with your sprites jumping on their toes when inactive and even the crowd happily clapping, calling out names and cheering at exciting moments. In fact the game SFX are beaut with the sound of a tennis ball having the hell smacked out of it ringing true. But TS is not a complete package. Where are the 'lets', why are the 'attitude' animations silent and weak, why don't the ball boys move, how come the linesman don't

react to a smack between the eyes and where are the familiar players (such as the Williams sisters)? These are minor quibbles, but although the gameplay is strong, TS suffers from serious franchise-beginner blues and in the end this will isolate non-tennis fans.





PROTIP: It's wise to build up your cash from wins so you can spend it unlocking new moves, wrestlers and arenas

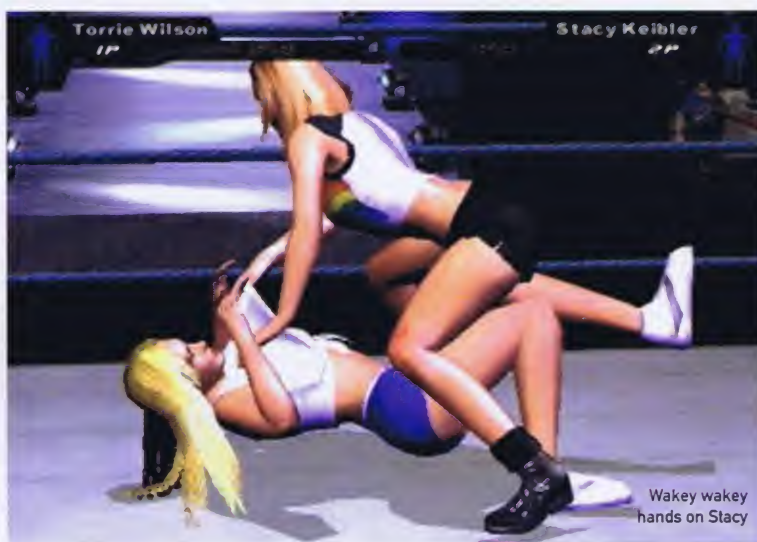
Smackdown! Here Comes the Pain (HCTP) is the latest wrestling release from Japanese developer Yukes, responsible for a string of wrestling games including Just Bring it and Shut Your Mouth. Like its wrestling predecessors HCTP contains a full list of match types such as hardcore, tables, elimination chamber and yes, bra and panties. HCTP brings together Raw and Smackdown! Superstars including Triple H, Brock Lesnar, Kurt Angle, Undertaker and The Rock, as well as classic wrestlers like Roddy Piper and The Iron Sheik.

HCTP functions on strike and grapple techniques, with 'X' used to strike and 'O' used to grapple. Using the directional pad in combination will allow you to execute chops, neck breakers, power bombs and a variety of other moves. The combination you perform will execute different moves depending on your opponent's position. For example, pressing down and 'O' when your opponent is on the mat will attempt a pinfall, while if the wrestler is standing a different move will be performed.

Reverses, strikes and grapples are key to HCTP, as is pummeling your opponent relentlessly with a sledge

Smackdown! Here Comes the Pain

Reviewer: Andrew Bulmer



hammer, chair, or just chasing them around the parking lot in a forklift. You can also steal your opponent's finisher by building up Smackdown! icons, which are gained, understandably, by laying the smackdown on your opponent. That's got to hurt.

Where HCTP evolves the most is the story mode that allows you to take your created wrestler through the ranks forming alliances, creating enemies and gaining superstar points and cash on the way. The cash you earn can then be spent to unlock different moves sets, wrestlers and arenas. Given the option of performing for Raw or Smackdown! you can move to different areas backstage to interact with other wrestlers creating a story and also request a transfer to the rival brand.

The visual appearance is a small step up from previous Yuke's titles with the real improvement coming in the way HCTP recreates the wrestlers' movement, particularly during entrances and special moves. This fits in well with the overall refinement and faster pace of HCTP giving you a similar experience with an expanded in-ring repertoire of counters and finishers.



VERDICT

Simple control mechanics, a large army of moves, wrestlers and match types, combine with an engaging story mode to form a more complete title than previous wrestling releases.

PROS Great story mode. Excellent character movement. Expanded move sets.

CONS No Mick Foley! Referee is too static and often gets in the way.

SCORE 8.0



Medal of Honor: Rising Sun

Reviewer: Ryan Shaw

You are Corporal Joe Griffin, based on the USS California and assigned to a tour of duty in the Pacific. The date is December 7th 1941. Awoken by loud explosions, you find yourself in the middle of Pearl Harbour under attack from the Japanese. You must make your way to the top deck, helping fallen comrades along the way and try to defend the ship at all costs. Covering five different environments and ten major missions, RS will take you to Japan, Burma and the Philippines. The game modes encompass single player, two player co-op, multiplayer (four players) and PS2 online, which is enough to satisfy anyone's itchy trigger fingers.

Rising Sun definitely has a different look and feel about it compared with previous Medal of Honor games. The inclusion of 'new blood' brings a fresh, but ultimately weak new approach to the table. The most noticeable change

PROTIP: The key to surviving the missions in RS is to make sure your ammo and grenade stocks are high and your health remains in the green. There are plenty of pick-ups scattered about the levels, so make sure you always check down alleys and inside buildings.

is in the impressive visuals. From the very first level, the use of smoke and fire effects is spectacular. Taking heavy fire, your ship is bombarded by fighter planes with one wayward plane even crashing right into the deck as you first emerge from the depths, raining fire and debris in numerous directions. The video and audio distortion effects seen in this particular section make you feel like you're really there, battling to save comrades from the wrath of the enemy and their deadly kamikaze pilots. However, later missions aren't as glorious, hampered by poor level design and contrived plot development.

Moving away from the more linear paths of previous MOH titles, the environments and enemy AI play a huge part in how the game can be played. Instead of following a pre-determined path, certain missions will present gamers with a choice

on how the mission will unfold. The enemies also present a different style of attack in comparison to previous enemies from other MOH titles. For example, Japanese soldiers like to set a whole bunch of booby traps, perform ambushes and exhibit better uses of stealth techniques.

In the end RS suffers from a distinct lack of challenge and its vague puzzles and unresponsive controls prevent it from reaching the level loyal fans expect. A bit of a disappointment, really – let's hope MoH: Pacific Rim shines.

VERDICT

A case of spectacle over substance, but it probably won't stop Rising Sun being a hit. The new visuals, enemy AI and non-linear level direction impress, even if the experience is short lived.

PROS Impressive visuals, realistic weaponry and environments, non stop action.

CONS Some level sections too scripted, aiming can be sensitive. Supported frame rates could've been better.

SCORE 7.0



FIFA 2004

Reviewer: Chris Stead

Soccer, football, whatever you want to call it, the one where you use your feet is Earth's true glamour sport. Played in every country and loved in every pub there is so much money in the sport that some players earn more than a small African country. For 10 years FIFA has been the core simulator of the sport but while happily bathing in its own glory, Konami's Pro Evolution snuck in and five-fingered its crown. FIFA 2004's response to Pro Evo is to tweak the engine and offer an entirely new style of play which greatly improves on previous instalments. However, it ends up falling on its own sword, unable to adapt the gameplay and controller responsiveness to match its competition.

With such a long legacy behind it, it is no surprise to find that FIFA's coverage of the sport rivals David Beckham's wallet for size. With 500 official licenses, 26 leagues (including the Premiership, divisions 1-3, but no NSL), 350 teams and 10,000 players, it cuts a lot of credibility. If you want it you pretty much have it and when you add a host of extremely realistic stadiums, your average soccer jockey is so joyous they're on the verge of hooliganism.

On top of your standard modes, FIFA 2004 adds a few key options to its impressive smorgasbord. This included the career mode, where you can manage a team through a season, ala Championship Manager (but not as in-depth). You must achieve club goals in order to win points that can be exchanged for better facilities or used on the transfer market. There is also a practice mode, a 'what's new' documentary and for PS2 and PC gamers, online play.

FIFA 2004's most important addition is its patented 'Off the Ball' controls. Essentially, it allows you to control two players at once, the man with the ball and a forward attacker, allowing you to put men into position for through balls



or crosses. The idea is fascinating and after a bit of practice it can be achieved with relative ease. Fans will also be overjoyed with more interactive corners, set plays and penalty kicks. However, while all these new additions positively affect the franchise, the gameplay has suffered. FIFA 2004 plays like an old grandmother with controls taking too long to respond and the sprites lacking the agility and fluidity to keep the game fast paced.

In terms of presentation, FIFA 2004 remains cutting edge. The animations are superb, the replays fantastic (now with arrows drawn on) and the updated player lists impressively lifelike. Add some of the best commentary ever heard in a game, a hip soundtrack (Kings of Leon, Stone Roses, Radiohead) and good crowd support and one of the world's most enduring franchises takes a refreshing step forward.

Is FIFA 2004 a superior title to its predecessor? Undeniably yes, but by moving the gameplay away from the more relaxed, arcade feel of FIFA 2003 to a harder, more realistic fare, EA have opened the door for direct comparisons with Pro Evolution Soccer. Unfortunately, in this rendition it lacks the pace to match it.

VERDICT

FIFA 2004 marks a significant step forward and fans of the franchise will thoroughly enjoy this edition.

PROS Great animations. 'Off the ball' control system. Decent management mode.

CONS The controls need to be a little more responsive. The gameplay isn't fluid enough. Worst crowd graphics ever.

SCORE 75



PROTIP: When using the 'off the ball' control system, be sure to kick in sync with the sprite that is running forward. If the forward attacked runs beyond the final defensive line before the ball has been kicked it will be deemed offside.





SICK TRICK: When it comes to mind-melting moves, SSX is king. Nail a few standard tricks to max-out your turbo meter and then with a simple button press you can perform some stunning Uber tricks. Remember, there are Uber grinds as well as Uber grabs.



SSX 3

Reviewer: Chris Stead

As the last of the winter snows melt, boarders all across Australia seek a fix for their withdrawals and Dr. EA believe they have the right prescription in SSX 3. Their 'one mountain, three peaks' philosophy is the next grand step of the much loved franchise and fans will be delighted to know that its heart and soul (insanely massive tricks and cool characters) remains in place. However, in its third instalment the allure is beginning to wane. The phenomenal spectacle of SSX grows old quickly leaving you with a superficial experience that lacks the depth to offer long-term competition to the likes of Amped 2.

SSX3, nevertheless, is top tier game development and looks promising right from the outset. Like the feeling of a foot of white powder sliding beneath your board an excellent intro glides gamers into the experience while proving that the graphical quality and excellent presentation of this title is assured.

For fans of the franchise, it's like slipping into your favourite jumper, but there is a significant change and it comes in the form of a living, breathing mountain. This is true escapism, with alternate routes, NPC's cruising the trails and once you reach the bottom, be it face or feet first, you must catch a lift to the top (via cut-scene). The gameplay unfolds via success in the various competitions that are sprinkled across the mountain. Good results and radical performances earn you more cash and greater respect which converts to better equipment and abilities. However, if you are not keen on competition you can simply bypass these and explore the massive peaks.

The meat of SSX, however, has always been the jumps and tricks and it's here that you'll find its strength and weakness. If size does matter, then SSX3 is the Dirk Diggler of videogaming with more airtime per jump (complete with fireworks) than a Sydney to London

PROTIP: When heading down the tracks, keep an eye out for big glass advertisements. These can be crashed through and they usually hide a secret route or short cut that can give you the winning edge in close battles.

flight. Unfortunately, all these tricks are available from the outset and within a few attempts you will be busting uber tricks like you have been on the white powder for years. This is dumbed-down entertainment and although it remains fun as hell, it proves less rewarding than Amped 2. There are plenty of cool new additions such as stack-recovery, lip-tricks and butters, plus old favourites like secret paths and attribute development, but it cannot escape its simplistic challenge and thus, its reduced lifespan.

VERDICT

Of the two snowboard titles released just in time for summer, this is the arcade incarnation. Plenty of fun and instant entertainment that may fail to last the distance.

PROS Stunning to look at. Well designed, open mountains.. More tricks than a pod of dolphins.

CONS Main moves are available from the outset Poor Camera. Goes for spectacle over style.

SCORE
7.5

SSX 3

Has strengthened the franchise by moving towards Amped 2's living mountain design, but its focus on gravity-defying superman like tricks is fun in shortbursts, but not as rewarding. However, gamers of any level should have no difficulty mastering the gameplay.

Amped 2

More realism in both moves and environments gives gamers a greater sense of the sport and this depth gives Amped 2 an edge on SSX3. However, its difficulty and reduced sensationalism leaves it less viable as a mainstream product.



Amped 2

Reviewer: Chris Stead

As most snowboarders will testify, whipping through the trees at 100 km/h and busting massive airs into soft, luscious snow may be the best fun available to humankind, but it can be bloody painful too. Most of the pros have an injury list that would shock a GP into a coma. Thank goodness then for the Xbox and its ability to simulate the highs of the sport as accurately as it does in Amped 2. It looks delicious, has plenty of depth and pulls all the right moves, but inexperienced gamers may be put off by the steep learning curve and slight control issues.

You begin A2 ranked 249 and the aim is to slowly work your way up the ladder until no boarder is greater. Along the way you will pick up extra sponsors, get your picture published, improve your board's statistics and nail the most complex of manoeuvres. For those familiar with the Amped franchise, it is business as usual with an increase in players (24), mountains (14) and new moves (butters and lip tricks). Once on the mountain there are plenty more new side quests such as Photoshoots and Events (mini-tournaments where highest score wins) plus you must locate gaps, nail tricks and knockdown snowmen. Another new addition to the Amped franchise is Skating, a cross between skateboarding and snowboarding where you use a shorter board and can perform tricks

such as kick flips.

It all looks fantastic too. The mountains are huge and the environment and riders have a wholesome, realistic feel that produces a heightened sense of reality. The venues are incredibly lifelike and with local affairs such as New Zealand and Victoria's Mt Buller included, next winter it is possible to go on test this theory out for yourself. Obviously you can't really do a double rodeo tail grab onto a chair-lift cable grind, but A2 succeeds in its strive for pragmatism through its physics engine and gravity mechanisms. Lose your balance mid-jump and expect to grind your face into the ice. This does have some negative effects, especially in terms of the learning curve as casual gamers cannot simply pick up the controller and be a pro. This element may not have been as harsh if Microsoft had kept the grind balance on the triggers (instead of is difficult new left analogue location) and provided a recovery button to save wayward tricks.

It lacks the spectacle, glamour and cartoon fantasy of SSX3 and instead provides a soulful simulation with realistic moves, crashes and progression system. For owners of Amped, expect a more polished version of the original rather than a fresh, new experience while newcomers should know that A2 requires dedication to truly enjoy.

**SICK TRICK:**

Although it's tempting, there is no need to hit every rail and jump on the mountain. Instead, tackle every odd jump and give your sprite time to gather some speed and get a perfect line. In the end, this approach will result in a greater score.

VERDICT

A2 is the snowboard game that riders play. An excellent progression from its predecessor with plenty of depth, awesome environments and more cool moves than a dairy farmer's refrigerator.

PROS Great environments. Excellent engine that truly captures the sport. Plenty to do in the air.

CONS Sharp learning curve. Minor control problems. Winter is still a long way off.

SCORE

8.5



LucasArts certainly aren't renowned for RPGs, and while we're in the recognition department - due largely in part to the namesake of Star Wars and Indiana Jones - they aren't all that well known for original title gaming, either. But that hasn't stopped the company's foresight in development, and among a growing library of new and original games, LucasArts has unleashed Gladius, a traditional RPG experience that draws as much influence from old-school pen and ink role playing as it does Japanese and Western developed RPGs.

Beginning with a simple introduction, players are confronted with an epic story told through fantasy-art stills. They tell a tale of classic fortitude in good versus evil; the Dark God has been sealed away and the Great War has passed after much sacrifice. People no longer think of evil, and violence has been redirected to games of valour, skill, cunning and courage. These gladiatorial events keep the people of Gladius entertained and the memories of dark days at bay. But, when a king hides away his daughter of prophecy from a coven of witches so that she may live, evil stirs and the world of Gladius faces ominous times once again.

Gladius is a great example of substance over flash, a product that uses subtlety to draw players in. From the slick presentation to the epic story; Gladius is clearly a product of prudent vision. With this attitude, LucasArts has

Gladius

Reviewer: Stephen Farrelly

created a deep and layered affair of immersive gaming. There are over 100 unique character types to choose from and 16 character classes to aim toward. You can customise every member of your team, right down to the colour of their skin, hair and clothes and level them up according to your gameplay strategy. The crux of Gladius lies in its approach to the RPG formula; you'll build a 'school' of characters, with a number of important attributes available to balance your team out. Schools then compete against other schools in a variance of events, missions and tournaments. Each time you win a round, your school is awarded weapons, equipment, talismans, cups and more - the more barter you gain, the more access you have to competition. Eventually you'll aim to compete in the Gladius Championship, but, all the while, your main characters will take part in a story arc that leads straight off the epic intro - and it's this 'side' element to game's mechanics that provoke a deeper gaming experience.

Worth a look for RPG fans.

PROTIP: It's important to balance your team, don't favour only a few characters, if you do you'll end up with a team of two or three strong characters with everyone else being too weak to compete.

PROTIP: Be sure to check your journal, your character may have noticed something you didn't!

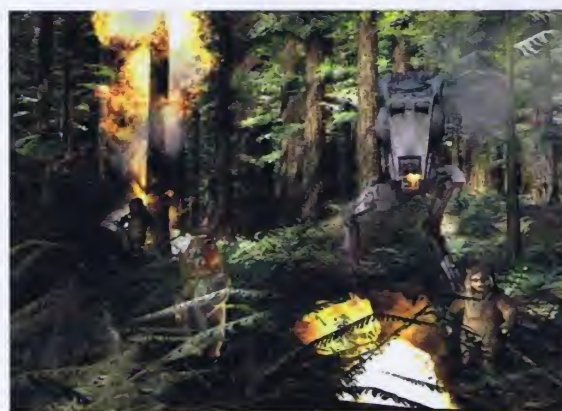


VERDICT

Gladius is an enriching title that succeeds on many levels, but it will only appeal to those with the patience to work through the game's cavernous layers.

PROS Deep character attribute and customisation system. Epic story arc.
CONS Slow gameplay. Some questionable character animations. A lot of text to take in

SCORE 7.0



Star Wars Rogue Squadron III: Rebel Strike

Reviewer: Stephen Farrelly

As the third instalment of the Rogue Squadron series and the fourth Star Wars title from Factor 5, Rebel Strike could be fittingly referred to as the San Rafael developer's Star Wars swan song. Factor 5's long standing relationship with LucasArts is in question now that the studio is working on Pilot Wings for Nintendo, and their assistance in R&D for Nintendo's GameCube successor further ties their creative hands – but to top it all off, it's heavily rumoured that Factor 5 is hard at work on an all-new original game that may or may not be gearing up as a launch title for the next Nintendo console. In short, Factor 5 is very, very busy.

A question is raised then; if Factor 5 has so much on their plate, why choose to make another game in the Rogue Squadron series? The answer lies in the technology the team created for Rogue Leader, the second title in the series and first to hit GameCube, and the time restraints the studio endured during the production of that game. Factor 5 has always hinted at wanting another crack at it. So, after playing around with game models yet again (apparently they didn't think the originals were 'good enough') and a sit down with series producer, Bret Tosti, to convince him it could work one more time, LucasArts gave the team the go-ahead, and here we are, smiling all the way to the couch.

To begin with, Rebel Strike is a much deeper gaming experience, with expanded story arcs for the 'in-between' bits of Episodes IV, V and VI as well as famous encounters from the original trilogy. The expanded universe is where the meat of game lies, however, and it's here players will reap the rewards of the hard work Factor 5 has put into Rebel Strike.

Once again you play as either Luke Skywalker or Wedge Antilles as they fight to stop the rise of the Empire. One level has Wedge crash landing on

Geonosis only to find Battle Droids still actively hunting and killing anyone they come across. It's wonderful to see the planet some 30 years after the Clone Wars (Episode II) – Star Wars fans will love it. To top it all off, Factor 5 has managed to cram the entire Rogue Squadron game into the package as a multiplayer bonus, where you can attack each classic mission in cooperative play, or take on a friend in heated dog fights.

Rebel Strike is a wonderful exclusive for GameCube, and something no Star Wars fan will want to do without.



VERDICT

Another fantastic representation of the Stars Wars universe, thanks largely to the stunning visuals

PROS Excellent visuals. Stunning sound. Exciting expanded story arcs for Star Wars fans.

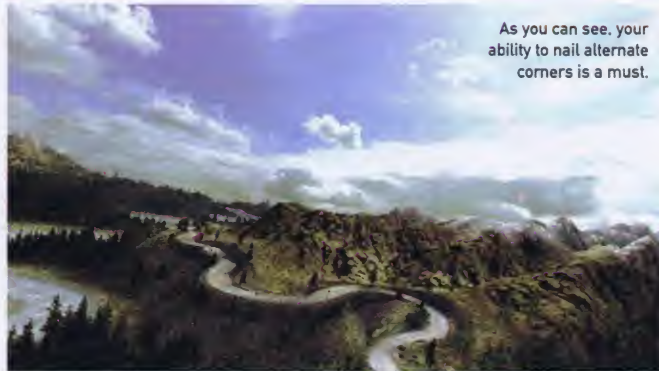
CONS Third-person missions leave little to be desired. A bit too short. No four player option.

SCORE **8.0**

Ahh, air time. That one moment in rallying where time stays still.



As you can see, your ability to nail alternate corners is a must.



WRC3

Reviewer: Chris Stead

One word will forever be the bane of WRC's existence and that word is 'Colin'. WRC 3 may be a serviceable rally title with some novel ideas and plenty to do but in terms of a gameplay experience, it ends up sitting neck-deep in Colin McRae's dust waving the official banner like its some sort of excuse. A smorgasbord of official cars, accurate tracks and data is only as strong as the engine that drives it and where Colin is cruising the world's rural beauty on a 2JZ Twin Turbo, the WRC is puttering along on an outback mower. It is a harsh analogy, but given the shocking crash dynamics, lacklustre terrain and weak presentation, it's a fair call.

Obviously, WRC3's biggest draw point is the official licence and as such, it provides all the teams, data and cars that bashed the respective bushes throughout 2003. There are five modes to tackle and these cover all the usual bases with the main standout being the four player championship mode. Gamers are not let down in the vehicular depart-

ment either, with 21 cars (including 7 futuristic and 5 concept cars) to bend, wrap and snap around the earth's larger flora. All 14 events from the 2003 championship offer their gravel to the wheels of man and for previous WRC owners, Turkey supplies the only new addition and it's a welcome one at that, being a standard track.

Unfortunately, this is where WRC's features plateau and begin their downward spiral. The cars handle unrealistically, turning on the mythical 'centre-pole' rather than the wheels and the crash physics are appalling. If in reality you could clip a rock at 40 km/h, do a barrel roll and land on your wheels without losing speed or gaining damage then heading down to the local mud field would take on a whole new meaning. To put it another way, WRC3 is an arcade title, rather than a true simulation, and you can perform stunts like bouncing off the crowd. The graphics also fail to take the breath

PROTIP: The key to nailing long drifting corners is to take into account the weight of your vehicle. At speed the weight of the car will cause it to slide and you can use this to take corners without slowing. You can then apply power to get the greatest velocity out of the apex.

away with the stale backgrounds failing to immerse. Trees and water effects are a generation old and there's poor car damage and inaccurate collision detection. Plus, the authentic circuits are uninteresting, with little altitude use, few surprises (such as bridges or gates) and very little off-track eye candy.

WRC 3 is the official rally title and staunch rally purists will be disappointed with everything beyond the data and aesthetics that come with that license. However, it is the market's second best title and is a step above the likes of V-Rally, but a whole fire escape below the famous Scot.

VERDICT

WRC3 enters the market with little self belief. The strength of this game sits heavily on its official license and the gameplay is left to languish in a distant second.

PROS Excellent data and information. Plenty of tracks and cars. Excellent course fly-over.

CONS Shocking crash dynamics. It doesn't know whether it is an arcade or simulation.

SCORE 6.5

Format/s:
PS2/Xbox/GameCube

Developer:
Radical

Publisher:
Vivendi

Classification:
G8+

Price:
\$99.95



The Simpsons: Hit & Run

Reviewer: Chris Stead



I wonder if they have
100% syrup Squishees
in here...



PROTIP: Hit and Run may be a GTA styled title, but it can't escape coin collecting. Instead of breaking vending machines and phone booths with your feet, run over them with the car as this will collect the coins automatically.



To quote the great man himself - 'woohoo!'. After a plethora of titles that wouldn't be fit to occupy Barney's beer-filled ashtray, the world finally gets a Simpsons game that is less like Lee Carvallo's Putting Challenge and more like BoneStorm. Hit & Run's GTA styled gameplay and familiar catalogue of characters and environments demands possession for all hard-core Simpsons fans, who will be able to forgive the repetitive missions and dodgy controls.

Anyone familiar with GTA: Vice City will feel right at home with H&R as the missions, character interactions and reliance on automobiles are high on identical. There are seven huge maps to explore, each with 8 moderately challenging missions to conquer, plus a smorgasbord of side quests, unlockables and collectables.

Despite a heavy platform component, the majority of action takes place in four wheels and you can take control of any car on the road. There are 12 special cars and new outfits that you can unlock/buy using the coins you collect from smashing objects or completing tasks. However, run down a civilian or kick or punch them and a Hit'n'Run will be issued, giving you a certain amount of time to escape Chief Piggum.

Unfortunately, the missions become quite repetitive and your patience may wear quicker than Grandpa's stories. This depends on your knowledge of Simpson's lore. Love the Simpsons like Selma and Patty love MacGyver and you'll happily keep playing due to the breakneck pace, insane number of one-liners and smart in-jokes. Plus, driving

between the various signature buildings and getting a physicality for such a well-known environment is a thrill all in itself.

The presentation is excellent, with spot-on voiceovers, perfect characterisation and graphics decent enough that when you see Millhouse, a 'hey, he looks just like you pointdextor' quip is in order. It isn't all smooth sailing, with occasional shifts in volume, collision detection issues and odd '3D-Homer' styled videos bringing fans back down to Earth. Add some annoyingly sluggish camera and controls and its apparent this title hasn't truly escaped the Simpsons video game curse.

Simpsons fans (and who isn't?) will adore this quote filled homage to Kwijibo, Marge, the little princess, dear rat boy and the other one. H&R is worth celebrating with some non-alcoholic champagne, as a franchise that is usually met with all the enthusiasm of Hans Moleman, now has a title that can be called the 'Best Simpsons Game Ever'.

VERDICT

A good Simpson's game? Believe it or not, loyal followers of this brilliant series finally have a game actually worth a few quarters.

PROS Funnier than a three second fart. Plenty of depth, excellent characters.

CONS Some dodgy controls. Repetitive missions. Multiplayer must be unlocked.

SCORE

8.0

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Classification: | Price: |
|--------------------------------------|------------|--------------------|-----------------|---------|
| Deathmatch: PC, Xbox, PS, GCN | Big Rpe | Gotham Games | M | \$49.95 |
| Chrome: PC | Techland | Take 2 Interactive | MA15+ | \$89.95 |



Celebrity Deathmatch

Reviewer: David Kvasnicka

Celebrity Deathmatch is based on the cult MTV show where, as the name suggests, various animated American celebrities kill each other in gruesome ways. Now you get to control the action with the same celebrities over and over.

CDM is a great title for when friends are sitting around a house with a console, bored (and possibly drinking). It has an amazing knack for drawing audiences and compelling even non-gamers to compete. What's more, CDM is accessible enough to allow anyone to learn the controls in literally seconds.

Consequently, winning comes down to rapid button mashing. Even the simplest "move versus counter-move" system of fighting is absent (except for blocking). The AI seems to merely perform attacks in random order, and this gets tedious. Using Justin Timberlake to corner an opponent, then farting them to death is all too easy.

There are a very limited number of celebrities to choose from, and the addition of a few fictional characters only serves to cheapen the experience. The option to create your own "celebrity" is also too limited, and has little value.

CDM is genuinely funny, and will have you laughing out loud. But soon the joke wears thin. After the initial surprise at the amusingly absurd fighting moves, it gets real old, real fast. Playing for more than an hour at a time is a chore – as by then you've seen all the moves and features. Some of the pre-match and post-match commentary is dreadful and hearing the same lame wisecracks again doesn't make it funnier.

There's certainly fun to be had in two-player mode, but CDM is not a game you'll be playing much on your own (assuming you have a life). Only recommended if you're a major CDM fan or want a funny new party game.

VERDICT

Like a fart – funny at first, but then it stinks.

PROS Amusing and accessible. No option for internet play, thank god.

CONS Unbalanced gameplay. Lastability issues.

SCORE
6.0



Chrome

Reviewer: David Kvasnicka

Chrome is admirable in that it doesn't give you the one-man-army versus the vast hordes of evil – rather, just one man versus an army. Consequently, the use of stealth is essential. However, this is made easy by the fact that most enemies seem deaf and blind – blasting away at a squad of enemies is rarely noticed by other soldiers clearly in view.

Also, during engagements, enemies don't attempt any serious tactics. They'll either stay put or move towards you, completely unresponsive to your actions. Worse, soldiers will warn, "grenade!" – but remain standing right next to one. And when they die, you're greeted with ridiculous B-grade movie death throes; bodies flying in all directions regardless of where and how they were shot.

The Polish developers seem to have exchanged clever AI for enemies that seldom miss, so Chrome is by no means easy. To the rescue is Deus Ex-like implants; one of which gives you slow-

motion, creating some sweet Matrix-style gunfights.

The implants, coupled with operable vehicles, give the gameplay a fair amount of depth and diversity, but your options are still limited. In many cases, you have to complete mission objectives in order, despite what the back of the box claims. Replayability might be an issue, even with the mission editor attached.

If Chrome wasn't as linear in structure, it could've been great – instead it's just damn good.



Chrome is a story-driven FPS that, on the surface, seems to have it all – unbelievably good graphics, large indoor and outdoor environments, vehicles, implants, and variety in gameplay.

It breaks from the mindless Quake style of FPS and instead becomes a one-man Special Ops game. Action is generally preceded by reconnaissance – crawling through long grass, peering over hill tops at enemy positions, and so on. The player is then compelled to thoughtfully choreograph assaults. Combat in the outdoor environments is fantastic, and often becomes a cat-and-mouse affair, creating some tense moments.

VERDICT

It's Deus-Ex with less brains and more balls.

PROS Beautiful graphics. Tense combat moments.

CONS AI is dubious at times. Excruciating load times.

SCORE
8.0

Format/s:

Dog's Life: PS2
NBA Jam: PS2

Developer:

Frontier
 Acclaim

Publisher:

Sony
 Acclaim

Classification:

G
 M

Price:

\$79.95
 \$99.95



Dog's Life

Reviewer: Mike Wilcox

Here's something you rarely come across in games these days, a hero that's not packing heat or neat gadgets. Jake is just your regular, everyday, run-of-the-mill dog. And thanks to his UK creator, Frontier Developments Ltd., this is the closest you're likely to get to living the life of man's best friend, quite literally.

Dog's Life is a platform adventure that centres around the roll of Jake as he attempts to uncover clues, and rescue his dog-napped damsel, Daisy. The game's wide open levels offer free roaming environments to explore and experience various challenges and mini games, which are generally fun.

To keep things interesting, throughout the adventure Jake comes across humans requesting his assistance and also canine challenges. These include typical seek and retrieve, collect-a-thons, and sheep herding, to the more

antisocial digging, barking, farting, peeing, and even crapping everywhere (as dogs like to do).

The game features around 20 breeds of dogs, which can eventually be controlled after Jake beats each one at a challenge. The use of each dog also plays an important role in completing many of the game's tasks.

Dog's Life's main innovation is the 'Smell-o-vision' mode. This switchable first-pooch perspective allows players to not only see through Jake's eyes, but 'see' various scents and smells within the environment. By sniffing up enough of the right coloured scents, treats and mini games become available, such as tug of war, scent-laying, digging, and more.

While intended for a younger audience, there is still plenty on offer for older dog lovers as well. Hugely innovative and definitely worth a play.

VERDICT

In the torrent of movie licenses, mediocre sequels and rip-offs, it's encouraging to have sniffed out a title offering such refreshing game play.

PROS Realistic body language to indicate Jake's health. A fun game that doesn't require senseless killing.

CONS One too many fart jokes. Some graphic clipping and poor lip synching.

SCORE

8.0

NBA Jam

Reviewer: Mike Wilcox



Few video game series have enjoyed such a long and fruitful history as the NBA JAM games. Born and bred in the back corner of arcades across the world a decade ago, it has appeared on nearly every platform to come along since then.

With this, 'Jams' first appearance on PS2, the game play not only sees the return of intense arcade style on court antics, but new modes and features too. The first of these is the move to 3-on-3 teams, offering not only more passing options, but a tougher defence to push through. Also new, when players max out their Jam Meter, a Hotspot becomes available near their 3 point line; get a team member over it in possession and it triggers a high-flying,

bonus point scoring, Monster Dunk... 'BoomShakalaka!'

Modes include quick fix exhibition matches, Jam tournaments for seasonal workouts, and the newly added NBA Legends Tournament. For this, a player's team travels back in time through different eras of basketball from the 50's to the 90's. Along with 70 of NBA's greatest past players, 'Legends' modes feature era-specific tunes, outfits, commentary and even games in black and white for the pre-colour TV era. (That's right, it hasn't always been in colour kids!)

Other courtside trimmings include earning Jam points which can be spent on creating and modifying players, teams, and unlocking other extras, and with support for up to 6 trash talking mates using two multitaps, we could almost forgive the lack of online features. Almost.

VERDICT

In need of a little more depth in the BoomShakalaka dept to match the features of the competition.

The no-rules b-ball crown remains with NBA Street

PROS Legends and Create-a-player modes provide much needed depth. Fast & furious gameplay.

CONS Not for serious sports sim fans. Twitchy A.I. results in CPU teams doing unrealistic comebacks.

SCORE

7.0

| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Classification: | Price: |
|--|---------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Buffy: PS2, Xbox, GameCube Halo: PC | Eurocom Bungie/Gearbox | Vivendi Microsoft | MA15+ MA15+ | \$99.95 \$89.95 |

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: Chaos Bleeds

Reviewer: Chris Stead

If your Buffy withdrawals are driving you insane and watching repeats is simply grinding salt into the wounds, then Chaos Bleeds may be your saviour. A traditional beat 'em up, it allows you to take control of your favourite stars as they kick, stake, punch and quip their way through hordes of vampires, skeletons, werewolves and spiders. However, while hearing that familiar theme music may serve as a temporary fix, it cannot ultimately distract from what is a decidedly average title.

Chaos Bleeds bills itself as one of the show's lost episodes and for fans, it slots into the timeline towards the later stages of Season 5. The game begins with a small scuffle at the Magic Box where Buffy and co discover that Kekistos (head bloodsucker previously believed dead) has returned to raise hell. Thus begins your adventure as you brawl through fairly interactive

environments such as graveyards and sewers seeking to unravel the mystery. Most of the action takes place under the control of the Buffster, but you can play most of the cast, including Willow, Spike and Xander. As for your arsenal, everything from spades, swords, sorcery, crossbows and holy water to, of course, the wooden stake, pop up for some supernatural butchery.

A serviceable beat 'em up, Chaos Bleeds never raises itself beyond standard cash-in shenanigans. The characters are recognizable in both looks and attitude, combat is basic button bashing with the odd combo and the gameplay occasionally strays to simple puzzle solving. Unless you are a major Buffy fan, it has nothing on the likes of Return of the King. A few unlockables (24 characters, 4 multiplayer levels) and a pitiful multiplayer component add little to its market viability.

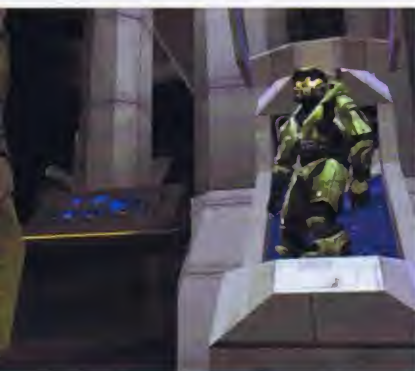
VERDICT

Buffy fans will love the character familiarity and vampire bashing.

PROS All your favourite characters. Interesting storyline. Caters to it's fanbase.

CONS Annoying camera. Overly simplistic combat. Very rough around the edges.

SCORE
6.0



Halo: Combat Evolved

Reviewer: Ryan Shaw

VERDICT

If you've never played it on the Xbox, you'd be nuts to miss this.

PROS In-depth campaign storyline, new vehicles, weapons and maps for multiplayer.

CONS Levels can become repetitive, power-hungry specifications.

SCORE
8.0

When Halo was first released for the Xbox, it received acclaim from gamers worldwide for being the most intuitive first-person shooter available. This game is a true classic; even if it is now two years old; the action and storyline can still suck you in easily and make you beg for more. Originally slated for release on the PC before Microsoft obtained the rights for Xbox, it has been a long time coming but the port from console to PC is finally here.

Bungie Studios partnered with Gearbox Software to release this PC port, as Bungie is currently focused on expanding the Halo universe with other yet to be released titles, such as Halo 2.

Halo takes place on a ring-shaped world full of ugly aliens called the Covenant. As ultra-marine Master Chief, your mission consists of a story-driven campaign mode where you must fight for your life and claim possession of the planet. Men under your command are also willing to lend a hand throughout various parts to help you rid the world of these troublesome aliens.

There are several new elements that have been made available to the PC port, but only for the multiplayer mode; the single player campaign remains the same as the Xbox version. The main difference between the two is that you're now using a mouse and keyboard instead of a console gamepad. Gamers will no doubt be champing at the bit to try out new weapons such as the Flamethrower and the Fuel Rod gun, as well as new maps and vehicles. User-created mods will also ensure the longevity of this title.



| Format/s: | Developer: | Publisher: | Classification: | Price: |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Crimson Skies: Xbox EyeToy: PS2 | Microsoft SCEE | Microsoft SCEE | G G | \$99.95 \$79.95 |

Crimson Skies: High Road to Revenge

Reviewer: Chris Stead



At one time or another, every human has looked at the birds in the sky and wondered what it must be like to float on the winds, even as they take aim at you. Well, the opportunity has truly arrived. It's the 1930's and history hasn't quite gone to plan. The people of Earth have taken to the skies and our hero, Nathan Zachary, leader of the infamous Fortune Hunters and blatant Indiana Jones rip-off, is a pirate eeking a living off odd jobs and gambling. Who would have thought that the fate of the world would end up in his hands?

Microsoft has crafted a fascinating title simply dripping with gameplay. The plot unfolds as you fly through the free roaming environments seeking jobs or searching for hidden tokens in order to upgrade your plane. With each completed job you learn more information about the world around you and the dastardly acts that threaten

its stability. Basically, this allows plenty of fast paced, deftly controlled flight through stunning environments. The control of the planes is spot-on, letting you swoop, spin, perform tricks, fire rockets and change views with little to no learning curve. Watch in awe as you avoid enemy fire by performing a barrel-roll, then take him out with a rocket, fly through his explosion and return to salvage his goods.

CS is breathtaking to behold, with long draw distances, intricate level design, juicy explosions and top tier animations. It's all held together by a ton of charisma and a real sense of adventure. The highlight of CS is its multiplayer component. With such ace controls, battling it out with 4 mates (16 online) is the type of frantic, heavy play that gamers have been missing of late. You can even land and take control of some ground artillery.

CS is quite a surprise and an extremely enjoyable gaming experience for all flight and shooter fans. The action is smooth, the characters lovable, the visuals brilliant and the missions gratifying. What more could you ask for?

VERDICT

An enjoyable arcade romp with just the right balance of action, challenge and fun. Well worth a look.

PROS Succulent gameplay and juicy visuals served on a smorgasbord of frantic action.

CONS The single player game may prove a little short. Flight Sim fanatics will whinge about everything.

SCORE

9.0

EyeToy: Groove

Reviewer: Mike Wilcox

Sony's award winning EyeToy will go down as one of this year's most innovative pieces of gaming gear. The fact that it doesn't take an expert gamer to enjoy it is perhaps the underlying reason for its chart topping success.

While 'Play', the original collection

of mini games bundled with the camera showed how motion sensing can work well in a video game, they only offered short lived fun. But 'Play' paved the way for more refined titles, such as a sports themed bundle (in development), and EyeToy: Groove which aims to turn your living room into a digital dance floor.

Rather than some of the daft actions players found themselves doing in Play, Groove requires more coordinated moves, similar to real dancing. Players also need to use more of their body this time, with bonus points awarded for shaking what your momma gave you.

Once again, complete control is via the camera, as players move body parts (hands are optional) to the correct position on the screen in time to one of the 25 hit music tracks on offer. Solo mode is fine for practise, but multiplayer is where the fun is. Players can take turns, or share the screen in co-op or battle



stages. 'Freestyling' plays a bigger part in each mode for higher point scoring, plus photos and videos are taken more regularly to relive those jam-busting moments. There's even a mode that tallies up the calories being burnt off.

More physically than mentally challenging, there's hours of entertainment on offer for the toe tapping inclined.

VERDICT

Another hit for the EyeToy. There is hours of entertainment on offer here for those who like to shake their groove thing. Shake it, baby!

PROS A more refined product for this innovative hardware. An all ages mass appeal. Play this an hour a day and you can forget about the gym.

CONS Seasoned gamers will still find the fun all too short-lived. You can't add other music. There are no rocket launcher upgrades.

SCORE

8.0

STRATEGY GUIDE

> SOUL CALIBUR II

You'll need a lot more than quick fists and fast feet to conquer this brawling, sword-swinging fighting adventure. Fortunately GamePro has the inside tips which will help you knock 10 shades of red out of your would be opponent.

The basics

Movement & distance

The most important gameplay element you'll first notice is the eight-way run. Moving on a 3D plane is not that new to fighting games, but few titles integrate it into competitive play as well as Soul Calibur II.

Moving around not only gets you out of the way of certain attacks, but also takes advantage of defensive blind spots.

Manoeuvring around (referred to as eight-way movement in SCII) also helps avoid walls that players can get slammed into or ledges that spell instant death.

All your fancy footwork won't mean much if you dance too closely to your foe, so be mindful of the opponent's reach and any moves that allow that gap to close faster than you can react. Ivy and Nightmare have particularly nasty long range attacks, so take special care.



Offence

Running Attack. With all the eight-way movement, it's easy to incorporate the running attack into your arsenal. The most effective is the sliding kick, achieved by tapping K while running – great unless your enemy is trained to mostly block low. It's best to save it for opportune instances, like when your opponent is next to a ledge.

Unblockables. These moves are easy to spot because there's a charge time delay and the resulting blow explodes with devastating flames. Each character has a few with different striking distances, so try to find one that covers a lot of ground but is a relatively safe distance from your opponent. Use when a foe has just been knocked down and hasn't immediately recovered to his feet.



Combo Starter Each character has some attack that lifts an opponent into the air for a combo. The move is almost always tap (left/down, B), but a few have additional ones, like Link's Rocket Stab, tap (up, B). Experiment to create your own favoured air juggles.



Defence

Air Recover. Landing on the floor after getting hit hurts and leaves you vulnerable to a myriad of ground attacks. To recover in the air, tap G at almost any point after you're knocked into the sky. Be aware that this can backfire and cause you to get juggled even more, so time your recovery well.

Wall Recover. Getting knocked into a wall is big, big trouble because it keeps you close to the player who's juggling you senseless. A tap of the G button once again lets you recover to either side of the wall and puts you back in action.

Air Shift. Without a doubt, the most important defensive move to use and abuse is the Air Shift. Normally, your character is helpless once knocked into the air, but Soul Calibur II allows you to shift your weight in the air to avoid getting caught up in lengthy combos. To do this, simply press in the direction you'd like to shift toward (ideally away from a ledge). Due to this nifty move, the combos on the following pages can be altered drastically, depending on the skill of your foe. For the most part, all moves described should land regardless of the other player's actions, but exceptions are noted where applicable.

SOUL CHARGE MOVE KEY

HA = Horizontal Attack

VA = Vertical Attack

KA = Kick Attack

GB = Guard Break

U = Unblockable

[...] = Entered independently

Each character in Soul Calibur has more moves than you can poke a stick at, however, it is the soul charge moves that reap the greatest rewards. For your fighting pleasure, GamePro has listed all these moves below...

The fighters



Cassandra

Weapon: Omega Sword & Nemea Shield

Discipline: Athenian Style

■ LEVEL 1

Gaia Quake: ↑ + HA + VA (GB)

Angel's Wrath: ↓, ↙, ← + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Angel's Press: →, →, ← + KA (GB)

Angel's Exile: ↓, ↘, → + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Shooting Star: →, →, HA + VA (U)

Gaia Quake: ↑, HA + VA (U)

PROS: Her agility makes her an easy character to defend with. Can adopt many styles of attack.

CONS: Large variety of moves but no distinct attacking strategy. Runs the risk of being repetitive and thus predictable.



Ivy

Weapon: Snake Sword 'Valentine'

Discipline: Unrelated

■ LEVEL 1

Poison Ivy: ↙ + VA (Hold) (GB)

Fear's Void: (↓ or ↙ or ↘) + VA + KA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Darkside: ←, ← + VA (GB)

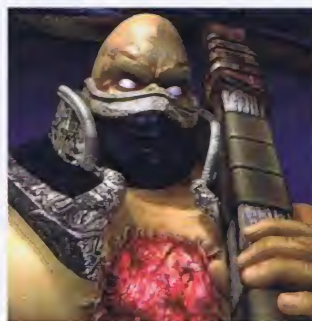
■ LEVEL 3

Ivy Brambler: ↓, ↘, → + VA (U)

Embrace of Lust: → + VA + KA (Hold) (U)

PROS: Good at all ranges, especially long. Varied offensive ability can counter most defenses.

CONS: Requires space to work in, not effective when pressured. Defenses must be selected accurately.



Astaroth

Weapon: Giant Axe 'Kulutues'

Discipline: Gyulkus

■ LEVEL 1

Offering: ↘ + HA + VA (GB)

Flying Divide: ↗ + VA (GB)

Axe Lower Cannon: ↘ + VA + KA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Breath of Hades: ←, HA + VA (GB)

Axe Crash: →, → + VA (GB)

Hades: ↓ + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Hades: ↓ + VA (hold) (U)

Canyon Creation: ←, ← + VA (U)

PROS: His size gives him great reach and powerful hits. Good 'Ring Out' opportunities.

CONS: Slow moves that can be readily anticipated. Slow Recovery.



Raphael

Weapon: Rapier 'Flambert'

Discipline: La Rapiere des Sorel

■ LEVEL 1

Dark Abyss: ↓, ↘, → + HA + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Affondo Ferdante: ↓, ↘, → + VA (GB)

Enveloping Stocatta: ↓, ↙, ← + VA (Hold) (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Affondo Ferdante: ↓, ↘, → + VA (U)

Enveloping Stocatta: ↓, ↙, ← + VA (GB)

PROS: Good range and excellent speed. Strong variety of stance manouvres.

CONS: Defensively weak at the medium range. Not as cool as his ninja turtle namesake.

SOUL CALIBUR II



Yunsung

Weapon: Chinese Sword 'White Storm'

Discipline: Seung Style Long Sword + Natural Footwork

■ LEVEL 1

Roaring Flame: →, → + HA + VA (GB)

Forced Divide: ←, HA + VA (GB)

Silent Arc: ↓, ↙, ← + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Pouncing Claw: ↗ + VA (GB)

Wagging Tail: VA, ← (GB)

PROS: An excellent mid-range offensive character. Decent component of moves.

CONS: Poor height range in offense. Weak against opponents that excel in medium range.



Necrid

Weapon: Enigma, 'Maleficus'

Discipline: Self-taught

■ LEVEL 1

Vine Snap: ↓, ↘, VA, VA (GB)

Lost Soul: ↓, VA + KA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Fiery Vein: ↙ + HA + VA (GB)

Overlord Strike: →, → + VA (GB)

Soul Strife: ←, ← + VA (GB)

Lost Soul: ↓, VA + KA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Fire Fang: HA + VA (U)

Dragon Roar: →, → + HA + VA (U)

Beowulf: ↓, ↙, ← + VA (U)

PROS: Very fast offensive speed. Very hard to defend against due to little telegraphing of manoeuvres.

CONS: Poor at long range. Uglier than a hat full of bolts.



Mitsurugi

Weapon: Katana 'Shishi-Oh'

Discipline: Tenpu-Kosai-Ryu-Kai

■ LEVEL 1

Flag Dance: ↙ + VA (Hold) (GB)

Wind Hole Vortex: ← + VA (Hold) (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Stone Wall Thrust: ↓, ↘, → + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Phoenix Tail: →, → + HA + VA (U)

PROS: Excellent defensive character. Very agile with a great side step and good reach.

CONS: Poor long range offensive options. You must master a lot of moves to make use of his pros.



Maxi

Weapon: Nunchaku 'Soryuju'

Discipline: Shissen Karihadi

■ LEVEL 1

Dragon Splitter: →, → + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Reverse Snake Cross: ←, ← + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Dragon Splitter: →, → + VA (U)

PROS: Large variety in attacking manoeuvres. Excellent in the medium to short range offensive

CONS: Can be weak against characters with strong short range games. Not very effective at long range.





Talim

Weapon: Elbow Blades 'Syi Salika' & 'Loka Luha'
Discipline: Wind Dance

■ LEVEL 1

Double Bartikal: [→ + VA + KA], [VA] (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Shearing Blade: → + HA + VA (GB)
 Paayon Thrust: →, → + VA (GB)
 Blue Sky: ↓, ↘, ↓ + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Ice Wind: HA + VA (U)
 Shearing Blades: → + HA + VA (U)
 Cold Wind: [VA + KA] (U)
 Blue Sky: ↓, ↘, → + VA (Hold) (U)

PROS: Extremely fast and agile. Excellent side-step.

CONS: No long range offensive. Can struggle against equally fast opponents.



Kilik

Weapon: Rod 'Kali-Yuga'
Discipline: Secret Art of Ling-Sheng Su Style Rod

■ LEVEL 2

Heavy Bo: →, → + VA (Hold) (GB)
 Phoenix Rage Thrust: ← + VA (GB)
 Rising Bo Feint: VA + KA
 Heaven Monument: [↓, ↘, →], [HA + VA] (GB)
 Legend Rush: ← + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Heaven Monument: [↓, ↘, →], [HA + VA] (U)
 Heavy Bo: →, → + VA (Hold) (U)
 Phoenix Rage Thrust: ← + VA (U)

PROS: Excellent medium distance fighter. Good 'Ring Out' strategies.

CONS: Poor against long range attackers. Somewhat weak attack in long and short range situations.



Voldo

Weapon: 2 x Katar 'Manas' & 'Ayus'
Discipline: Self-taught

■ LEVEL 1

Rat Straight: [↓, ↙, ←], [→ + VA] (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Demon Elbow: →, → + VA (GB)
 Blind Stance: → + HA + VA (GB)
 Blind Dive: ↘ + HA + VA (GB)
 Insanity Trap: →, → + HA + KA (GB)
 Red Stitch: [↓, ↙, ←], [→, → + VA] (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Lunatic Wheel: [↓, ↙, ←], [→, → + HA] (U)
 Rat Straight: [↓, ↙, ←], [→ + VA] (U)

PROS: Massive variety in attacks at all ranges and heights. Decent speed.
CONS: Is easily contained by long range opponents. Requires a lot of play to master.



Nightmare

Weapon: Soul Edge 'Zweihander'
Discipline: Styles memorized by Soul Edge

■ LEVEL 1

Reaver: [↑/↓ + VA + KA], [HA + VA] (GB)
 Fatal Dive: ←, ← + VA (GB)
 Rook Splitter Alternate: [← + VA + KA], [↘ + VA] (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Dark Soul Impact: ↘ + HA + VA (GB)
 Piercing Strike: → + VA (GB)
 Quick Revenge: → + VA, VA (rapidly) (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Flying Edge: Down + HA + VA (U)
 Rook Splitter: →, → + VA (U)
 Thrust Throw: ↙ + VA (U)
 Midnight Launcher: ← + VA (Hold) (U)
 Fatal Dive: ←, ← + VA (U)
 Cannonball Splitter: [← + VA + KA], [→ + VA] (U)

PROS: Very unpredictable and hugely variable in attack. Strong at all ranges.

CONS: He has a weak side-step in both attack and defense. Easy to anticipate due to well telegraphed manoeuvres.



SOUL CALIBUR II



Xianghua

Weapon: Chinese Sword

Discipline: Sword play passed on by her mother

■ LEVEL 1

Lower Great Wall: [HA + KA], [VA] (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Lian Hau Cannon: ↘ + HA + VA (GB)

Waterfall: → + VA + KA (GB)

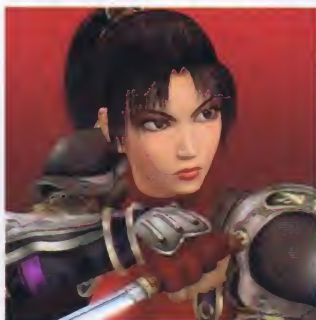
Lower Great Wall: [HA + KA, HA + KA], [VA] (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Lower Great Wall: ↘ + VA + KA (U)

PROS: Excellent speed and evasive characteristics. A solid 8-way run offensive.

CONS: Can often rely too heavily on specific moves. Looks cant kill.



Taki

Weapon: Ninja Swords 'Rekki-Marui' & 'Mekki-Marui'

Discipline: Musoh-Battoh-Ryu

■ LEVEL 1

Stalker Thunder: [HA + VA], [VA] (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Assassin's Strike: →, → + VA (GB)

Dream Scroll: ↓, ↙, ← + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Dream Scroll: ↓, ↙, ← + VA (U)

PROS: Excellent short range fighter. Plenty of height variation in attack.

CONS: Weak against good long range opponents. Poor offensive capabilities outside short range.

HOW DO I UNLOCK...?

EXTRA ARCADE MODE:

You must beat the Arcade mode with any character.

EXTRA VS MODE:

You must beat Extra Arcade mode with any character.

EXTRA SURVIVAL MODE:

You must complete Survival mode with at least 10 wins.

EXTRA PRACTICE MODE:

You must beat Weapon Master mode with any character.

DEMO THEATRE:

You must beat the Arcade mode with any character.

CHARACTER PROFILES:

You must beat the Extra Arcade mode with any character.

EXTRA VS TEAM BATTLE:

You must beat the Extra Team Battle with any character.

OPENING (ARCADE VERSION):

You must play, but not necessarily beat, the Extra Time Attack on the Extreme setting 4 times.

OPENING (HOME VERSION):

You must play, but not necessarily beat, the Extra Survival mode on the No Recovery setting 4 times.

UNLOCKABLE CHARACTERS:

Complete the following stages in Weapon Master Mode to unlock the desired players.

- Yoshimitsu (2-3)
- Charade (3-1)
- Cervantes (3-4)
- Sophitia (4-5)
- Seung Mina (6-3).
- Assassin (3-2 of Extra Missions)
- Lizardman (Complete all 58 Extra Missions)
- Berserker (Sub-Chapter 1-1 of Extra Missions)



Unlockable characters



Seung Mina

- **LEVEL 2** Heavy Fall: ↘ + VA (GB) Glory Wing: VA + KA (GB)
- **LEVEL 3** Radiant Wing: ↑ + HA + VA (U). Spinning Divide: ← + VA (Hold) (U). Retreating Sands: ← + VA + KA (U). Glory Wing: VA + KA (U)
- PROS:** Flexible at all ranges. Very fast attacks.
- CONS:** Lacks power. No level 1 soul charge moves.



Cervantes de Leon

- **LEVEL 1** Cross Bone Divider: ←, ← + HA + VA (GB) Shadow Flare: ← + VA + KA (GB)
- **LEVEL 2** Iceberg Circular: ↑ + HA + VA (GB) Dash Flare: [↓, ↘, ←], [→ + VA + KA] (GB) Anchor Whirlpool: ↙ + HA + KA (GB) Night Raid: ↙ + VA + KA (GB)
- **LEVEL 3** Dread Lifter: HA, VA (U) Geo Da Ray: ↓, ↘, ←, VA (U)
- PROS:** Excellent at mid-range. Some good Guard Impact manoeuvres.
- CONS:** Weak at close range. Isn't particularly fast.



Charade

Charade mimics the fighting style of a randomly selected character and thus has no character specific moves, advantages or disadvantages.



Yoshimitsu

- **LEVEL 1** Skull Splitter: HA + VA, HA + VA (GB)
- **LEVEL 3** Crying Sword Spirit: →, → + HA + VA (U) Sudare Wheel: Up + HA + VA (U) Yoshimitsu Flash: HA + KA (U)
- PROS:** Good at close range. Plenty of power.
- CONS:** Poor at long range. Attacks aren't well masked.



Sophitia

- **LEVEL 1** Gaia Quake: ↑ + HA + VA (GB)
- **LEVEL 2** Sword Shower: ← + VA (GB) Olympus Cannon: →, → + VA (GB)
- **LEVEL 3** Gaia Quake: Up + HA + VA (U) Guardian Upper: ←, ← + VA (U) Ascension: ↗ + VA (U) Elk Strike: ↓ + VA (U)
- PROS:** Good balance of speed and power. Easy player to pick up.
- CONS:** Can become boring quickly. Hard to master.

SOUL CALIBUR II

PAL-only characters



Lizardman

■ LEVEL 2

Further Attack: KA, VA (GB)

Unknown: ↑, HA + VA (GB)

8 Way Run: →, VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Further Attack: KA, VA (U)

Unknown: ↑, HA + VA (hold) (U)

8 Way Run: ↙, VA + KA (U)

PROS: Excellent at close range. Even distribution of offensive ranges.

CONS: Vulnerable at long range. Cold blooded.



Berserker

■ LEVEL 1

→, → + VA (GB)

↓ + VA (Hold) (GB)

↗ + VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

← + HA + VA (U)

VA (Hold) (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

↓ + VA (Hold) (U)

←, ← + VA (U)

PROS: Good at all ranges.

Plenty of power

CONS: Very slow. Power moves leave him vulnerable.



Assassin

■ LEVEL 2

Guard Break: Down, Forward + VA + KA (GB)

While crouching: HA + VA (GB)

Vertical Break: Down, Forward + VA, VA + KA (GB)

PROS: Plenty of reach. Plenty of power.

PROS: Poor horizontal attacks. Vulnerable to the 8-way run.

Console specific characters



Mishima Heihachi

■ LEVEL 2

Thunder Twin Hammer: HA, HA, VA (GB)

Hammer Punch: ↓ + VA, VA (GB)

Iron Hand: ↓, ↘, →, VA (GB)

Twin Hammers: ←, HA + VA (GB)

Shadow Step: ←, ←, VA + KA

Running Cross Arm: →, HA + KA

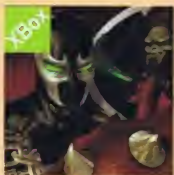
■ LEVEL 3

Demon Scissors: KA, VA (U)

Heaven's Wrath: HA + KA

PROS: Very fast attacking speed. Excellent juggling capabilities.

CONS: Lack of long range attacks. Poor against medium to long range attacks.



Spawn

■ LEVEL 1

Hunting Cry: →, →, HA, VA (GB)

■ LEVEL 2

Demonic Killer Flash: ←, HA, HA, HA

Devil Spiral: →, →, KA, VA (GB)

Hell Spiral (I): HA + VA (GB)

Hell Spiral (II): →, →, HA + VA (GB)

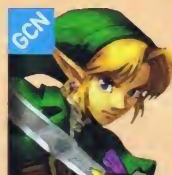
■ LEVEL 3

Hunting Cry: →, →, HA, VA (U)

Tormented Rage: ←, ←, VA (U)

PROS: Great height range in attack. Very fast and agile.

CONS: Viable offensive range is restricted. Main long range move is easily evaded.



Link

■ LEVEL 1

Running Hack: →, → + VA (GB)

Jump Slash: ← + VA + KA, ← (GB)

■ LEVEL 3

Power Thrust: ←, ← + VA (hold) (U)

PROS: Is effective at all ranges. Has good speed and agility.

CONS: Poor long range attacks can be easily evaded by opponent. Only available to those playing the Gamecube title.



Going to a LAN party? Go in Lanfire style!

Ultra-light only 4kg!

ThermalTt



LANFIRE CASE



MATCHING
KEYBOARD
AND MOUSE



XBAG

LANFIRE FEATURES

- 🔥 Ultra-light: Net weight only 4kg
- 🔥 Drive bays: 3 x 5.25", 4 x 3.5"
- 🔥 Tool free assembly design
- 🔥 Dual USB2.0 & IEEE 1394 Firewire in front panel
- 🔥 Fireball front panel - Electro Luminescent design
- 🔥 4 Ultra silent case fans
- 🔥 Hardcano 9 - Temperature sensor and 4 dials to adjust fan speed

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CODE VAULT

CHEATS, TRICKS, SECRETS

Sometimes you just need a little help. There are some tough levels out there in the video game world and some awesome bonuses to unlock. There's nothing wrong with a little aid, is there?

Splinter Cell



PC The following cheats can be entered by pressing TAB:

Extra Health: HEALTH.
Float Ability: FLY.
Invisibility: INVISIBLE # (0 = off, 1 = on)
More Ammo: AMMO.
No Clipping Mode: GHOST

Xbox Entry to all levels: Go to the name entry screen and type 'llamaudite!'.
PS2 These are the keypad codes:

Mission 1 – Police Station

Keypad 1: 091772
Keypad 2: 5929

Mission 4 – CIA HQ

Keypad 1: 7687
Keypad 2: 110598
Keypad 3: 2019

Keypad 4: 110700

Keypad 5: 0614 (if Dougherty makes it through the door before you)

Mission 5 – Kalinatek

Keypad 1: 97531

Keypad 2: 33575

Keypad 3: 1250

Mission 8 – Chinese Embassy II

Keypad 1: 1436

Keypad 2: 9753

Keypad 3: 1456

Keypad 4: 1834

Keypad 5: 7921

Mission 9: Presidential Palace

Keypad 1: 2126

Keypad 2: 70021

Keypad 3: 66768

Freedom Fighters

PS2 The following cheats can be entered at any time during the game:

Shotgun: Δ , X, \square , O, O, UP
Invincibility: Δ , X, \square , O, O, LEFT
Infinite Ammo: Δ , X, \square , O, X, RIGHT
Slow Motion: Δ , X, \square , O, O, RIGHT
Fast Motion: Δ , X, \square , O, O, DOWN
Change Spawn Position: Δ , X, \square , O, X, UP
Rocket Launcher: Δ , X, \square , O, Δ , LEFT
Heavy Machine Gun: Δ , X, \square , O, Δ , DOWN
Nail Gun: Δ , X, \square , O, X, LEFT
Sub-machine Gun: Δ , X, \square , O, Δ , UP
Sniper Rifle: Δ , X, \square , O, Δ , RIGHT
Maximum Charisma: Δ , X, \square , O, X, DOWN
Ragdolls: Δ , X, \square , O, \square , UP

Medal of Honor: Frontline

Xbox The following cheats can be entered into the Enigma Machine (it looks like a typewriter). If entered successfully a green light will appear.

All Cheats: ENCHILADA
Paintball FMV: COTOBREATH
Bullet Shield: NOHITSFORU
Earn Gold Star: SALMON
Unlock Mission 2: BASS
Unlock Mission 3: STURGEON
Unlock Mission 4: PIKE
Unlock Mission 5: TROUT
Unlock Mission 6: CATFISH

Invincibility: When the game is paused, enter: X, L, B, R, BACK, Y, X. If this is entered correctly the game will unpause.

AFL Live 2004

PS2 To unlock State Of Origin mode: State against state, mate against mate? To activate this cheat head to the start menu and press: \square , \square , \square , Δ , Δ , Δ , O, O, up, up, up, down, left, left. If entered correctly you will hear a sound.

Indiana Jones and the Emperor's Tomb

PS2 **To activate Invincibility:** Head to the start screen, hold L1 and R2, then press Up, Up, Down, Up, X, □, X, O, Up, Down, △, Start.

Avoid Fall Damage: A nice little trick to avoid receiving damage when falling is to enter the combat mode mid-flight. This will save you from a trip to the bubbler.

F-Zero GX

GCN **Unlock Diamond Cup:** This cup will become unlocked when you have come first in Ruby, Emerald and Sapphire Cups on the Standard or Expert difficulty settings.

Unlock Master Class: To achieve this you must come first in Ruby, Diamond, Emerald and Sapphire Cups on the expert difficulty.

Unlock Dark Schneider: To unlock simply defeat every chapter in Story Mode.

Freelancer

PC **God mode:** A little more difficult than you average cheat, its reward is definitely worth the challenge. Simply use a text editor to open the "perfoptions.ini" file found in the game folder. To activate the cheat simply change the "DIFFICULTY_SCALE = 1.00" line to "DIFFICULTY_SCALE = 0.00".

Return to Castle Wolfenstein: Tides of War

XBox **Retro Bonus:** Older gamers will be delighted to know that upon the completion of the campaign mode on any difficulty setting (and even on co-op) will open up the original Wolfenstein 3D.



Star Wars Jedi Knight: Jedi Academy



PC **To gain access to the following cheats, open up the text screen (Shift '~') and type: 'devmapall' or 'helpusobi'. This will enable cheats, then type:**

Enable god mode: god
 Give all weapons, ammo, force mana, etc: give all
 Increase ammo: give ammo
 Increase armour: give armor
 Increase health: give health
 Raises saber abilities: setsaberall (1 to 10)
 Set force abilities: setforceall (1 to 3)
 Changes game speed (default = 1): timescale (#)
 Changes your saber's colour: sabercolor (color1)(color2)
 Fly an X-Wing: fly_xwing
 Drive an AT-ST: drive_atst
 Kill all NPCs: npc kill all
 Matrix-esq camera: thereisnospoon
 No clipping mode: noclip
 Pick up a dropped saber: g_saberpickupabledroppedsabers (0 or 1)
 Skip the current level: victory
 Suicide: kill
 Issue a taunt: taunt
 Max out your force power meter: give force
 Warps to a level with cheats activated: devmap (level name)
 Similar to 'devmap' but does not enable cheats: map (level name)
 Turns enemy AI off: notarget

Tony Hawk Pro Skater 4

GBA HOW DO I UNLOCK?

Mindy, Frycook, Momo and Roger: Beat the Pro Challenges.
Turbo Mode: Nail all the gaps on every level except for The Zone.
The Zone: Collect all 90 hidden packages.

Grand Theft Auto: Vice City



PC The following cheats can be entered at any time:

All light weapons: THUGSTOOLS
All medium weapons: PROFESSIONALTOOLS
All heavy weapons: NUTTERTOOLS
Commit Suicide: ICANTTAKEITANYMORE
Raise Wanted Level: YOUWONTAKEMEALIVE
Full Health: ASPIRINE
Full Armor: PRECIOUSPROTECTION
Gives Tommy girly arms/legs: PROGRAMMER
Change Skin/Clothes: STILLLIKEDRESSINGUP
Cars can fly: COMEFLYWITHME

Perfect Handling: GRIPISEVERYTHING
Blow up nearby cars: BIGBANG
Aggressive Drivers: MIAMITRAFFIC
All traffic lights are green: GREENLIGHT
Cars can drive/hover over water: SEAWAYS
Decrease Wanted Level: LEAVEMEALONE
Women follow you: FANNYMAGNET
Smoke a cigarette CERTAINDEATH
Makes Tommy fatter: DEEPPRIEDMARSBARS
All traffic lights are green: GREENLIGHT
Cars can drive/hover over water: SEAWAYS

Spyro: Season of Flame

The following cheats can be entered at the title screen:

Blue Spyro: Up, Up, Up, Up, Down, Left, Right, Down, B.
Unlimited Lives: Left, Right, Left, Right, Right, Right, Up, Down, B.

The Italian Job



PS2 The following cheats must be entered at the main menu:

All challenges: □, □, △, ○, ○, □, △, ○.
All checkpoints: ○, □, △, □, △, □, △, □, ○.
All destructors: △, □, □, △, □, □, △, ○, ○, ○.
All free rides and Lamborghini Miura: □, △, □, ○, ○, ○, △, ○.
All Cheats: △, △, ○, △, ○, △, □, △, □, △.

PS2 Xbox How do I unlock?

Bonuses: When you successfully finish story mode, the following bonuses will be unlocked: photo gallery, concept art, pre-production gallery and credits.
All Cars: To unlock all the cars you must complete the game with an 'A' rank.
Extra options: These will be unlocked when you complete each Circuit Race with a first position. They can be found at the game option menu.

Vietcong

PC To enable cheat mode, press '~' and enter 'GIFTFROMPTERODON'. You can then enter the following codes:

Invulnerability: CHTKOSTEJ
Restore Health: CHTHEAL
Restore Health for Team: CHTHEALTEAM
Refill Ammo: CHTAMMO
Get Grenades: CHTGRENADES
Access Quickfights: CHTALLQF
Indian Masks: CHTCANNIBALS
Get Weapon (0-30): CHTWEAP #
3rd Person View: CHT3PV (0/1)
Show FPS: SHOWFPS (0/1)
Show Stats: SHOWPROF (0/1)

Wakeboarding Unleashed: Shaun Murray



PS2 HOW DO I UNLOCK?

Jordan: Complete all the Star Search Challenges with a perfect run.

The following codes can be entered at the main menu:

All Boards: Up, Up, Left, Left, Right, Right, Down, Down, Up, Left, Right, Down, Up, left, Right, Down.

All Levels: □, □, □, □, ○, ○, ○, ○, △, △, △, △, □, ○, △.

Clear All Gaps: R1 + L1 + L2 + R2 four times.

Xbox The following codes can be entered at the main menu:

All Boards: Spin the right analog stick counter-clockwise 15 times.

Extra Boards: Up, Up, L, L, R, R, Down, Down, Up, L, R, Down, Up, L, R, Down.

Level Select: X, X, X, X, B, B, B, B, Y, Y, Y, Y, X, B, Y.

Viewtiful Joe

GCN HOW DO I UNLOCK?

Joe's Girlfriend: Complete the game in Adult mode.

Viewtiful World video: Complete the game in Adult mode.

V Rated Mode: Complete the game on Adult mode.

Alastor: Complete the game on V Rated mode.

Ultra V Rated Mode: Complete the game on V Rated mode.

Captain Blue: Complete the game on Ultra V Rated mode.

Raymond 3: Hoodlum Havoc

GBA Bonus levels: If you own the Gamecube version of Rayman's latest title you can link it to the GBA to unlock a whopping 10 new levels.

The Sims

GCN The cheat codes are enabled by holding L & R at the main menu. You can then enter the following codes:

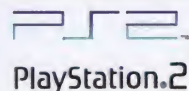
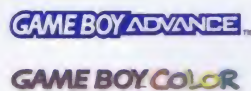
First-Person view: FISH EYES

'Play the Sims' mode: SIMS

'Party Motel' - two-player game: PARTY M

Make objects free: FREEALL

Unlocks all locked items: MIDAS



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Simpson's Hit and Run

YBox The following cheats must be entered at the main menu while holding down L & R. If these are entered correctly you will hear a horn.

Get Faster Cars: X, X, X, X.

Different Camera: B, B, B, A.

One-Hit Wrecks Car: Y, Y, X, X.

Turn Horn Button Into Jump Button: X, X, X, Y.



Zelda: The Wind Waker

GCN **Understand Hylian Language:** Complete and save the game. When you replay the game, the Valoo, The Deku Tree, and Jabun will all speak English.

Ayrl's costume: When you complete the game, Ayrl will have a new costume.

Your original outfit: Complete the game and you will be able to replay it wearing the clothes from the beginning of your adventure.

Colour Photos: Complete the game and save. When you next play, the DX Camera will be in your inventory and it can take colour shots as opposed to black and white.

Tiger Woods PGA 2004

PC The following cheats must be entered in capitals:

Everything: THEKITCHENSINK

All Courses: ALLTHETRACKS

All Golfers: CANYOUPICKONE

Sunday Tiger: 4REDSHIRTS

Erica Ica - ICYONE

Val Summers: BEVERLYHILLS

Dominic "The Don" Donatello:

DISCOKING

Ace Andrews: ACEINTHEHOLE

Solitia Lopez: SHORTGAME

Hamish "Mulligan" McGregor: DWILBY

Takeharu "Tsunami" Moto:

EMERALDCHAMP

Downtown Brown: DTBROWN

Edwin "Pops" Masterson: EDDIE

Moa "Big Mo" Ta'a Vatu: ERUPTION

"Yosh" Tanigawa: THENEWLEFTY

Cedric The Entertainer: CEDDYBEAR

Brute Force

XBox Enter the following codes as profile names:

SPRAGNT: Reduces enemy accuracy.

RAPIDFIRE: This will increase your rate of fire.

DNA Sequences.

The secret characters in Brute Force are unlocked by finding their DNA sequences. The various DNA sequences can be found in the following missions

Confed Marine: 1 or 6

Feral Colonist: 2

Feral Outcast: 3

Seer Follower: 4

Militia: 5 or 11

Outcast Shaman: 7

Seer Priest: 8

Feral Shaman: 9

Gunthar Ghent: 10

Shadoon: 12

Fire Hound: 13

McTavish: 14

Shrike Soldier: 15

Shrike Heavy: 16

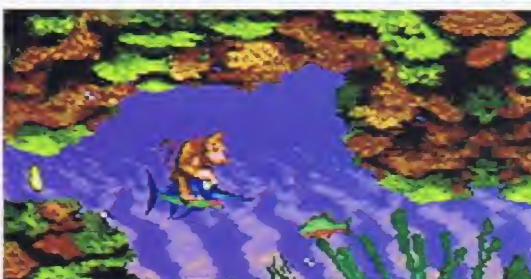
Shrike Hound: 17

Hunter Lord: 18

Donkey Kong Country

GBA **Extra Lives:** Head to the file select screen and then go to the 'erase' command towards the bottom.

Hold select and enter: B, A, R, R, A, L, L. If entered correctly you will hear Diddy say 'Not Bad' and you can now start a game with 50 lives.



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GIGABYTE™
TECHNOLOGY

Your online PC gaming needs are covered with news, patches and mods. By David Kvasnicka.



MOD CORNER

NATURAL SELECTION 2.0 (HALF-LIFE)

Wow. Someone must have had an acid nightmare while watching Aliens. Natural Selection is a team-based FPS mod with a difference. The premise is a battle between human "Frontiersmen", and mysterious aliens called the Kharaa.

NS has truly terrifying moments. As a marine, you're called in to take out infestations in massive spaceships and complexes replete with dark corners and twitchy lighting. As an alien, depending what kind of creature you 'evolve' into, you must stalk, ambush and kill humans from the shadows.

The interesting aspect of NS is that both teams must build structures and bases, and expand their domination that way. Both sides battle for 'resource' locations, on which they must build to gain the currency that determines which team will have the edge in terms of upgrades/evolutions.

The humans have one designated

Commander, where the action is presented to them in top-down RTS fashion. Commanders can give orders, set down structures to be built by marines, research new technology and equip the troops with weapons and gadgets. However your men, being controlled by real people, only follow orders 50% of the time - so realistic!

The aliens' command structure is completely different but very effective, with a hive-mind system that relies on individual initiative, rather than the strategies of a single commander.

NS will alienate the vast majority due to its steep learning curve, and lack of eye-candy. There are also some balancing issues in favour of the aliens, but these should be resolved in v2.1. NS requires brains and strategy, so it's unsuitable for a quick blast, but there's a growing Australian fan-base, so it's definitely worth a look.



WWII REDUCED TO MASSIVE ONLINE EVENT

Online simulation developer iEntertainment (known for the Total Sim Series) will host a recreation of the World War II naval battle, the Battle of Midway on December 5, 2003. The simulation will supposedly be able to handle hundreds of real players in one massive online engagement, and last the entire weekend.

The recreation will be played using a free demo of the developer's next flight sim title, AirPower Pacific: Pearl Harbor to Midway. The full version of AirPower will be released in March 2004 by Activision.

The online event will be open to all players who sign up for a two-week free trial account on <http://www.totalsims.com>. Individuals with either Warbirds or Battle of Britain 1940 accounts will be allowed to play with their existing accounts.

iEntertainment hosts battles of most of the famous World War II battles online each night, with players from 70 countries making up 400 virtual squadrons. Whether Australian players will have favourable latency for the big simulation weekend remains to be seen.

Hot Patches

Below are the hottest patches out as of early November. You can either search for the files names, or go to GameArena (games.bigpond.com) for the latest in gaming updates!

- Battlefield 1942 v1.45:
battlefield_1942_patch_v1.45.18.exe
- Chrome v1.1.1.0: chromepatch.w
wenglish.1.1.1.0
- Command & Conquer Generals
v1.06: generals-106-english.exe
- Enemy Territory v1.2:
ET_Patch_1.02.exe
- Freelancer v1.1: flpatch.exe

- Front Line Force v1.7b:
frontline17b_update.exe
- Hell in the Pacific v1.2:
HitPv1.2_Patch.exe
- GTA Vice City v1.1:
vicepatch_11.zip
- Halo v1.2: patch1.0-1.02.exe
- Jedi Knight 2 v1.04:
JKIIUp104.exe

- Neverwinter Nights v1.32:
NWNEnglish1.32Patch.exe
- Quake 2 v3.20:
q2-3.20-x86-full-ctf.exe
- R6: Raven Shield:
RVSPatch_1.0_To_1.41_UK.exe
- Return to Castle Wolfenstein
v1.41: wolf_update_1_41.exe
- Shattered Galaxy v1.57:

- SG157.exe
- Unreal Tournament 2003 v2225:
ut2003-winpatch2225.exe
- Vietcong v1.30:
Vietcong_v130.exe
- Warcraft III FT v1.12:
War3TFT_112_English.exe
- Warcraft III ROC v1.12:
War3ROC_112_English.exe



QUICK TIPS

COUNTER-STRIKE 1.6

The new version of CounterStrike addresses some balancing issues with the introduction of the new budget rifles, the Clarion 5.56 and the IDF Defender. Clearly going for a middle-of-the-road approach, both rifles excel at medium range firefights, but can't match up to the more expensive rifles. Both rifles have a longer recoil refresh rate (RRR), so for consistent accuracy, leave longer gaps in between shots/bursts than the other rifles.

CLARION (console: famas)

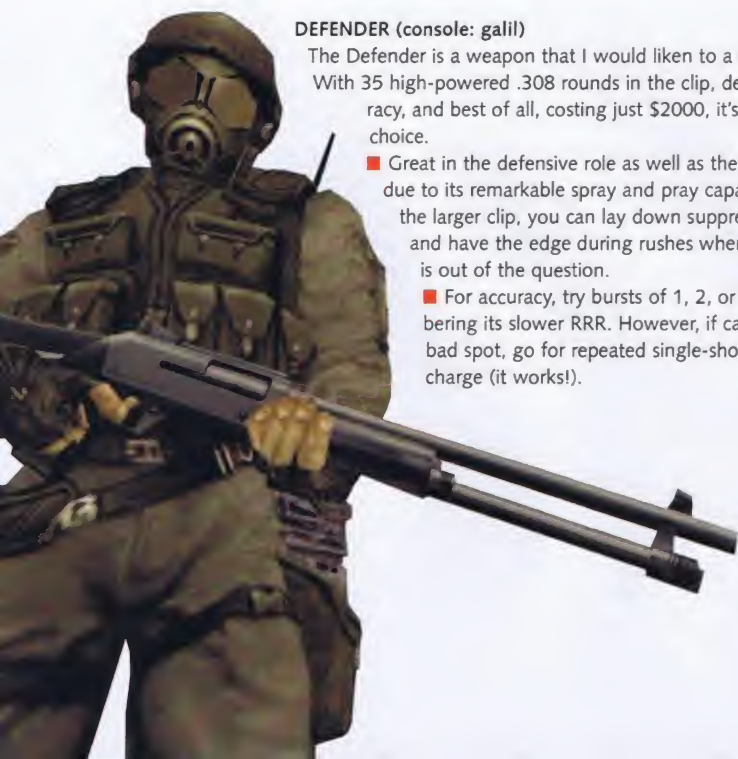
The most despised of all rifles, the Clarion has a slow rate of fire, only 25 rounds in the clip, weaker firepower, and seemingly random accuracy at times. So what the hell is it good for?

- The selling-point of the Clarion is its ability to switch back and forth between three-round bursts as necessary (default RMB). The three-round burst has just the right amount of bullet spread to give you the best chance at delivering a headshot, even if your aim is slightly off in the heat of battle.
- The Clarion has decent accuracy while moving, so it can be useful as a cheap rushing weapon.
- Avoid point-blank firefights (due to its slow ROF), or long-range firefights. The Clarion takes practice, but once mastered, is well worth it.

DEFENDER (console: galil)

The Defender is a weapon that I would liken to a mini Para. With 35 high-powered .308 rounds in the clip, decent accuracy, and best of all, costing just \$2000, it's a popular choice.

- Great in the defensive role as well as the assault role due to its remarkable spray and pray capabilities. With the larger clip, you can lay down suppressive fire, and have the edge during rushes where reloading is out of the question.
- For accuracy, try bursts of 1, 2, or 3, remembering its slower RRR. However, if caught in a bad spot, go for repeated single-shots, or a S&P charge (it works!).



CYBERSLAM



HALO TOURNAMENT & LAN VANS

Gamers all over tell us every day what is wrong with the video game industry in Australia. Every item of feedback is registered and sometimes big things are born. Cyber Slam was conceived when a bunch of gamers emailed us and said "Hey, why can't we have a tournament where we win stuff".

The idea was a good one and after a quick meeting with the marketing team at AMD in early 2002 we launched Cyber Slam, an over the internet multiplayer tournament sponsored by the AMD Athlon XP processor. Quake 3, Unreal Tournament 2003, Soldier of Fortune and a few other multi player games were played with gamers winning hard ware and software prizes. Never before could gamers win cash by playing video games without leaving home!

What started as a simple tournament with a few hundred players has led to Australia's largest internet tournament. The Cyber Slam Halo Online Tournament is currently being played. The tournament has received thousands of registered gamers, who are all playing for a cash prize of \$1000 and a trip to the United States to play as the AMD Halo Warrior in the global Halo tournament to be held in January.

While Cyber Slam was rocketing along, another meeting between Cyber Slam and AMD produced another gamers' delight – the 'AMD Cyber Slam Lan Van'. Its aim is to bring all the stuff gamers need and deliver it to them for free just for visiting their local LAN and playing games!

If you want to check the out the action of Australia's largest online multi player gaming tournament, visit www.cyberslam.com.au. While at the site you can see how massive the Cyber Slam Halo Online Tournament is and also register for the next tournament that will be coming around very soon.

Oh yeah, and if you're playing your local LAN ask them, "Does this LAN have the Lan Van visit"? If not, tell them they are missing out on free stuff like AMD processors, T-shirts, keyboards, video games and heaps more.

For more details about Cyber Slam, how to get involved and where the Lan Vans are going visit the website www.cyberslam.com.au



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DOWN TIME

TYRESE: RAPPER & FILM STAR

As GamePro subscribers get a free copy of 2 Fast 2 Furious DVD, we thought we'd let one of the stars sell his wares...

In 2 Fast, were you intimidated by the fact that you had to make up for Vin Diesel, the fact that you had to replace him?

I didn't replace him. My character didn't have anything to do with Vin. Technically speaking, in the eyes of the movie, and in the eyes of a lot of the fans, I did replace Diesel, but then again I didn't. I didn't have to have the same attitude, I didn't have to have the same demeanour, nothing about my character was his character. I wouldn't have committed to the project if they told me I had to be Vin. I could never be Vin and Vin could never be me. I just brought some newness and some energy to the situation.

What do you think is going to become the favourite scene on the 2 Fast DVD?

All scenes that don't include me! I love Cole Hauser's performance, it was out of control. That man was definitely poster worthy. Of course Paul Walker's scenes were great. He did what he was supposed to do for this movie. I can't see anyone's character being replaced. A lot of people aren't probably going to make the third one, but me and Paul are going to be in that!

Are you a fast and furious driver?

No, I am just spontaneous. I do things behind the wheel sometimes, but you know, I tend to do my dirt early in the morning when there is nobody on the freeway. At four o'clock in the morning.

Are you a car person?

I have seven cars. I have got an Escalate, a Range Rover, an Audi TT, I have got a CL600 Benz, I have a few cars.

Which one do you pick when you want to impress women?

The Benz, that is the one that I take the most when I try to impress people.

Do cops target you since you are a black guy driving Mercedes?

No, they don't target me. Because I look like I belong there. Some people that are in a Mercedes don't look like they belong. I mean, they are black, but they don't look like they belong. You know how people can look uncomfortable in an expensive car, as if somebody gave it to them or they've only had it for a week or two, but when I am in my Benz, I look like I own it.

What do you expect from your career?

I would be a fool to try and tell you what is on the way. Everything about my life has been totally unexpected. I come from Watts, L.A. and everything about my upbringing is the total opposite of how I am living now. I couldn't have guessed or prayed in a million years that I would be where I am today.

Is there going to be a focus on safety issues on the DVD?

Yeah, because they have got a driving school on the DVD. A bunch of stunt guys go into detail about the experience of doing all the stunts. People are easily influenced, but you really have no control over what people are going to do once you express yourself. Just because somebody is doing something in a movie it doesn't mean that you should go out and do it. That is stupid.



DVD LORD OF THE RINGS - THE TWO TOWERS Special extended DVD Edition and Collector's Box Set

Peter Jackson's extended version of The Two Towers is more than an indulgent director's cut, with all the deleted scenes re-inserted. Like the extended version of Fellowship, it is a new version of the film, created especially for the DVD.

Proof? How about 40 minutes of new scenes with visual effects, sound effects, additional score and dialogue polished to the same standard as the original movie, plus two additional discs of all-new special features. The crew commentary throws the spotlight onto the lesser-known background geniuses and all commentary versions promise to be improvements upon those in Fellowship, as they had more time the second go 'round.

The Collector's Box Set has a Gollum "Smeagol" statue and a fifth bonus disc. 30,000 copies will be released in the Australian market. Gimmick? Probably. There's no need for so many actual discs other than to reinforce to consumers they're getting more bang for their bucks. DVD: M15+ \$79.95. Box set: M15+ \$149.95



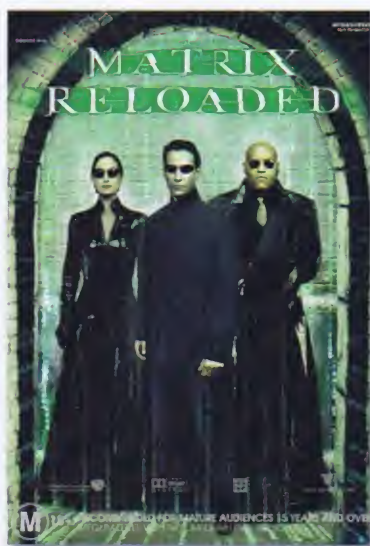
DVD X-MEN 2

Over seven hours of bonus material should make this double disc a must-buy for X Men fans but it's tricky to know who it will appeal to. Fans will already be familiar with the XMen comic's backstory and non-fans won't care. The docos are flat and workmanlike - unlike the new Matrix docos that sizzle with production values of a similar standard to the film. And deleted scenes? Well, they were deleted for good reason. M15+ \$39.95



DVD 2FAST2FURIOUS

F2F2 trades its plot for fast cars, hot women and wild stunts and thanks to director Singleton's keen eye for stunning visuals and the chemistry of its two leads, the deal pays off. The extras cater to car lovers. Actors driving school, tricking out a hot import car and supercharged stunts are superficial but sweet insights into the film's vehicles while DVD staples such as deleted scenes, outtakes and director commentary also shine. \$39.95



DVD THE MATRIX RELOADED

The bonus features are a fan's paradise. A doco on the creation of the awesome freeway chase scene includes commentary from key department heads (love the proliferation of Aussie accents). Don't miss the clip from the MTV Movie Awards where hosts Sean William Scott and Justin Timberlake appear in doctored Matrix Reloaded scenes - the Wachowskis have a sense of humour after all!

Details of the product placements and the making of Matrix spin-off ads will interest marketing students but nobody else. Doco The Matrix Unfolds ties together the creation of the films, games, anime and website. M15+ \$49.95



DVD THE YOUNG ONES Series Two

20 years since it first premiered on BBC TV in the UK, ABC DVD has released cult classic series The Young Ones. Does the comedy hold up and will a new generation dig the antics of Neil the hippie, anarchist Vyvyan and batty-boy Rick? Yes and no. Drowning in snot and giving

birth to farts is always funny. So is well-timed swearing and mindless destruction. The low-gloss picture is disappointing and some peripheral characters have little contemporary relevance but the cameo from Madness makes it worth the trip. PG. \$34.95



MOVIE REVIEW S.W.A.T

Director Clark Johnson. **Stars** Samuel L. Jackson, Colin Farrell, Michelle Rodriguez, LL Cool J and Olivier Martinez.

S.W.A.T holds special memories as an under-rated 70s cult TV series about Los Angeles's Special Weapons And Tactics team. It was crying out for a movie adaptation. Oddly, this adaptation isn't as wild and loud as you'd expect from an armour-plated-cops-with-cool-guns scenario. It is light on the blockbuster action and heavy on dialogue and reality.

TV director Johnson sets up Jackson as a veteran police officer. Farrell is his hothead recruit, joined by Rodriguez and LL Cool J playing members of a new team that gets called in when the action is too hot for the police. Cut to a hostage situation, a training scene and the big feature; the S.W.A.T. team trying to protect an arms dealer who offered a \$100 million reward to anyone who frees him from custody.



MOVIE PREVIEW CHEAPER BY THE DOZEN

Director Shawn Levy **Stars** Steve Martin, Bonnie Hunt, Hilary Duff, Piper Perabo, Tom Welling
In 1950 Cheaper by the Dozen,

a film about a strict father who organised his dozen children along the same lines as he ran his business, released to generally sound reviews. This is not that movie, or even a remake of it. From the director of Just Married, this Cheaper by the Dozen features comic genius Steve Martin Parenthood-style, again.

Martin is the father of a dozen kids (the similarities end there) and a successful small-town football coach who gets a once-in-a-lifetime offer to coach a big league team. The new job involves an increased workload and shifting the clan into the city - thus setting the scene for haphazard comic interplay. Bonnie Hunt plays Mom to Martin's Dad and to some degree the film's success will lie in their chemistry, which has every chance of succeeding given Hunt's familiarity with the material - she wrote an early draft of the script.



MOVIE REVIEW IN THE CUT

Director Jane Campion **Stars** Meg Ryan, Mark Ruffalo, Jennifer Jason Leigh, Kevin Bacon, Nick Damico

Jane Campion shrugs off complacency and to get down and dirty with this serial-killer thriller and, mostly, she succeeds. Her adaptation of Susanna Moore's 1995 novel is grittily faithful - from early glimpses of male genitalia, when leading lady (Meg) stumbles across a guy getting a blow job in a hotel basement, to playing fast and loose with the hookers in the brothel downstairs from Meg's friend's apartment. In a role initially intended for Nicole Kidman, Meg is an emotionally immature English lecturer having liaisons with a myriad of inappropriate men. As the murderer selects victims on increasingly intimate terms with Meg, she knows her days are numbered and any one of her boyfriends could be guilty. The pace lags near the end but Meg's breakout performance is enough to hold the attention.



MOVIE PREVIEW MASTER & COMMANDER: THE FAR SIDE OF THE WORLD

Director Peter Weir **Stars** Russell Crowe, Paul Bettany.

Russell Crowe's first movie since A Beautiful Mind is a \$200 million seafaring epic set during the Napoleonic Wars. As Jack Aubrey, Crowe captains a British warship attacked by the French, who he then pursues around Cape Horn. He re-teams with Paul Bettany, who played his ginger-haired buddy in A Beautiful Mind. Here, Bettany plays the ship's doctor, Aubrey's confidante. Australian director Peter Weir spent over two years making the film, shot in a tank in Baja California. It's based on the 10th volume of Patrick O'Brian's 20-volume collection of novels. Fox is hoping to make it the first of a franchise, Crowe has expressed an interest in furthering the story and the local film industry is hoping any future sequels might shoot in Sydney, where the new Sunrise Studios will have a perfectly suitable wet stage.



MOVIE PREVIEW THE MATRIX REVOLUTIONS

Director Larry and Andy Wachowski
Stars Keanu Reeves, Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving, Laurence Fishburn
Likely classification M

Why make a trilogy if the final chapter won't knock everyone's socks off? That seems to be the thinking of the Wachowski Brothers, who copped it for The Matrix Reloaded but look set to deliver with Revolutions. No fairytale ending and only a few main characters still standing at the end.

We don't need to say anymore - it's just started what will no doubt be a blockbuster cinema season, so join the crowds and see it soon. And watch out for the GamePro ad!



GAMING WITH GERLING

Gerling guitarist Burke Reid is more Leisure Suit Larry than PacMan. The retro gamer picks his favourites and reminisces about '80s big hair bands and Frogger.

What's your fave video game of all time?

I used to love those Sierra games like Space Quest and Police Quest. And when the parents went out, Leisure Suit Larry. What was the first video game you ever played?

Frogger. I think I was 7 years old and at a friend's house. I remember freakin' out thinking how cool it was and begged my mum constantly for the next year for a video game console. [It] never came true. She said it would rot my brain.

Who's the best gamer in Gerling?

Probably me because I'm the only one who plays them now and then.

If you could create your own game, what would some of the features be?

Well I'm a fan of those strategic games from back in the '80s so I'd probably go along that route. I just finished this book about the rise and fall of heavy metal, which was good but kind of sad. It tells the tales of all those '80s hair bands (Van Halen, Motley Crue, Poison etc) on their struggles to the top and how far-gone they became after success. I think basing

a game on that would be hilarious. You know, being some kid, moving to LA and trying to start a band a la Guns N' Roses. Your pursuit to the top would be a funny game to play. I guess like Vice City without all the violence and a bit more Leisure Suit Larry thrown in.

You're out doing the summer festivals and your own shows at the moment.

What sort of preparation do you do before a show? How do you relax? What do you eat and drink?

Nothing that fancy. We usually just have a couple of beers and crack some jokes on each other. Eating before the gig is not a great idea, especially curries. I've made that mistake a few times. Half way through the set it feels like there's a troop of Vikings trying to get out.

What do you want for Christmas?

More equipment for my little studio and enough time off to go see my family in Canada for a little while.

See Gerling at the upcoming national Big Day Out tour from 16th Jan - 1st Feb.

For more show info: www.gerling.net.au

underworld 1992 — 2002

UNDERWORLD 1992-2002

It could be successfully argued that Underworld have been and continue to be the lynchpin to dance music. Their progressive beats and emotive rhythms have been a signpost for dance at its peak in the early-'90s, the unifying of live performance and DJing techniques and closing the gap between rock and dance. In effect, this double disc chronicles not only the duo's decade long career but that of the form itself. In addition to the classics, London Elektricity, Atomic Hooligan and Paul Oakenfold have given Born Slippy – one of the group's most celebrated tunes – a remix circa 2003 (*Festival Mushroom Records*).



RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS THE BEST OF

It's not until the disc is in full funky swing that you start to get your head around the fact that the Red Hot Chili Peppers have been around for 20 years. Higher Ground, Give It Away, Breaking The Girl, Under The Bridge, Suck My Kiss, Scar Tissue, Soul To Squeeze... The Chili Peppers' list of hits is hard to beat. There's two new tracks found here too – Fortune Faded and History – both of which were recorded during their recent By The Way tour. As a bonus, there's a special CD/DVD component featuring 15 videos (two never before seen), exclusive commentary from the band, documentary clips and behind-the-scenes footage taken from the Californication tour. (*Warner Music*)



PRIMAL SCREAM DIRTY HITS

It's Primal Scream's first ever compilation and it covers their career from 1991's tripped out *Screamadelica* through to the band's latest and heaviest album, *XTRMNTR*. If you only had one disc for a party, this one could trace every mood – from the raucous late-night kick off (*Loaded*) to the more sombre, introspective sunrise (*Long Life*). For a limited time, the album comes with a bonus disc of remixes by artists such as the Orb (*Higher Than The Sun*), Chemical Brothers (*Swastika Eyes*) and Massive Attack (*Exterminator*). (*Sony Music*)



NO DOUBT THE SINGLES COLLECTION 1992-2002

It's been 16 years in the making, but No Doubt have racked up a mighty set of singles that even fare well next to their mega-hit, *Hey Baby*. There's *Ex-Girlfriend*, *Hella Good*, *Underneath It All*, *Don't Speak* and *Simple Kind Of Life* among others. The group has recorded a cover of Talk Talk's 1984 hit, *It's My Life* as the only new track on the album. Alongside the Singles Collection, a No Doubt box set will be released around the same time that will also include B-sides, rarities and a DVD of the band's film clips and *Live In The Tragic Kingdom*. (*Universal Music*)

OTHER RECOMMENDED 'BEST OF' XMAS COLLECTIONS

1. R.E.M – *In Time: The Best of R.E.M 1988-2003*
2. SUEDE – *Singles*
3. TLC – *Still Crazy, Sexy, Cool*
4. COLD CHISEL – *Ringside*
5. VARIOUS – *Hip Hop Don't Stop Volumes 1 & 2*



Vibrating headphones

The new Philips HGG100 headphones feature neck and ear shell vibration modules and an adjustable microphone making them perfect for online console gaming. Many gamers may have become accustomed to force feedback controllers, but products like these headphones look set to allow us all to be further immersed into our gaming environment. www.crestonline.biz
 PRICE: \$299 DISTRIBUTOR: Crest PHONE: 1800 812 261



Movies, photos & music on the go

Here's one for the ridiculously cool basket and it's available for sale in Australia now. The Archos AV300 series player not only plays and records MP3 music files – it's also equipped with a 3.8in colour LCD display for viewing photos or movies, although you can also output to TV. It connects to your computer via a high-speed USB 2.0 interface or by recording directly into it using video sources such as a TV, VCR or camcorder. The latter ability is usually optional but in Australia all AV300's will be bundled with this option.

Further optional accessories include digital camera, FM radio/remote control and memory card reader add-ons. The 20GB version retails at \$1390, 40GB at \$1570 and 80GB for \$1870. We know what we want for Christmas.... www.itechinternational.com

PRICE: From \$1390 DISTRIBUTOR: i-Tech International
 PHONE: (02) 9261 8101

LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE Antec's illuminated LED light tubes, powered by USB ports in a PC or PS2, flash in time with a game's soundtrack. Über-keen Xbox or Gamecube owners would need a USB adaptor. Useless but pretty.

PRICE: \$33 DISTRIBUTOR: Altech Computers PHONE: (02) 9735 5655

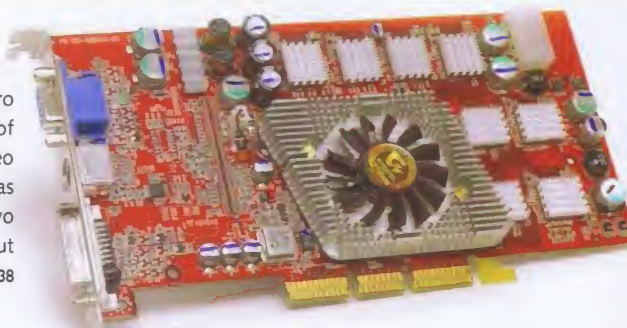


COOLSTUFF

We test out the coolest gear and gadgets every issue...

FAST CARD + GAMES

Gigabyte's GV-R98P256D graphics card is based on ATI's top of the line Radeon 9800 Pro graphics processor and is one heck of a 3D powerhouse. It features a whopping 256MB of DDR-II memory and has VGA-out (standard monitor), DVI-out (LCD monitor) and S-Video TV-out connectors. It comes with S-Video to RCA and DVI-VGA converter cables as well as four full games (Serious Sam, Motocross Mania, Heavy Metal and Rune) in addition to two demo games (Oni, 4x4 Evo). PowerDVD software means you can watch DVDs straight out of the box. www.synnex.com.au PRICE: \$899 DISTRIBUTOR: Synnex Australia PHONE: 1300 880 038



SLEEK GAMERS MOUSE PAD

The Xide II is a slick alternative to a bare desk and would make a great compliment to a modded PC case. The Xide II features high intensity blue LEDs and a surface designed for accuracy and response.

PRICE: \$39 DISTRIBUTOR: PC Case Gear
PHONE: (03) 9568 0932



62" WIDESCREEN ON YOUR FACE

You know that a product is cool when it comes with warnings such as 'Consult doctor before use if you have a heart disorder' and 'Not for use by children under 16'. They've been available for a while now, but Olympus' lightweight Eye-Trek glasses continue to reduce in price. Compatible with devices such as game consoles, DVD players and TVs, the FMD250W model can present the equivalent of a 62in widescreen display from 2 metres while the FMD200 model approximates a 52in display from the same distance. Both have integrated headphones and an optional converter box allows for PC use. I've wished for something like these since when as a kid when I'd practically have my nose pressed against Mario's pixelated mug and be ordered to move back from the TV before I got square eyes. www.phrixus.com
PRICE: FMD200 \$1299 (\$1099 for November only); FMD250W \$2599 (\$2399 for November only)
DISTRIBUTOR: Phrixus Technologies
PHONE: 0425 319843



Ooh, what a big image

With home theatre projectors still a bit out of reach for many, Australian outfit Digislide have come to the rescue with a cost effective solution. The MantaRay projector is both unique in design and specifications – it has built-in TV capabilities and is fully compatible with game consoles, DVD players, VCRs and cable TV. To keep its price down, the device has a brightness level of just 575 ANSI lumens but the benefit is that lamps are only \$99 to replace when needed. From 3 metres out, the MantaRay can throw a 1.5m (diagonal) image in 16.7-million colour and supports widescreen (16:9) mode. www.mantaray.net.au PRICE: \$1799 VENDOR: Digislide PHONE: (08) 8239 2154





PC GAMES, CONSOLE CONTROLS

If you're a console gamer, chances are that you've become quite accustomed to your trusty controller. With Gameon's console to PC controller adapters, there's no need to get used to new button layouts or fork out for a dedicated PC equivalent. PRICE: \$19.95 VENDOR: Gameon PHONE: (03) 9568 0932



BLASTIN' SOUND CARD

Creative's Sound Blaster Audigy 2 ZS Platinum Pro sound card is sure to get your games sounding better. The ZS supports EAX 4.0 ADVANCED HD game effects that delivers a more realistic in-game audio experience using audio effects as well as up to 7.1-channel surround sound speakers. The \$499 package is comprised of an internal PCI sound card, external connector hub and an infrared remote control. The external hub's connections include those for FireWire, optical in and out, line-in, microphone and headphone while the card itself has three 3.5mm connections for surround sound speakers. Speaking of which, Creative has also launched its \$349 Inspire T7700 7.1 speakers. Gamers can find a list of EAX-enhanced games at <http://eax.creative.com/gaming/gameindex.asp>. PRICE: \$499 VENDOR: Creative PHONE: (02) 9021 9898



64-BITS & PIECES

AMD recently released its 64-bit Athlon 64 and Athlon 64 FX-51 processors. Although a little pricier, the Athlon 64 FX-51 chip is particularly suited to gamers as it features several technologies to improve performance and memory workloads such as those that occur when playing latest games or during digital media creation. For more info go to www.amd.com.sg/au/

Meanwhile on the Mac front, Apple's sexy new Power Mac (left) is now shipping to Australian customers and features a 64-bit PowerPC G5 processor that speeds up existing 32-bit applications such as games and allows up to 8GB of DDR400 SDRAM to be installed (up from 4GB). Power Macs G5s now use an 8x AGP Pro interface for graphics cards to ensure that the latest cards from NVIDIA and ATI can work to their full potential. In fact, buyers have the option of choosing a high-end ATI Radeon 9800 Pro graphics card with 256MB of memory. Optical S/PDIF-in and -out are the standard audio ports, so connecting surround sound speakers should be a snap. The machines are available in three configurations, 1.6GHz, 1.8GHz and dual 2GHz G5 processor models and start at \$3599. www.apple.com.au VENDOR: Apple PRICE: From \$3599 PHONE: 13 3622

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DOOM!

Ten years ago, on December 10th 1993, one of the most influential computer games ever made was released by id Software.

Doom revolutionized games in many ways. Without Doom there would be no Quake or Unreal and 'frag' would not be a word. It pioneered shareware; you could download the initial levels before you outlaid any money on the full version. Of course, after playing nine levels it was almost impossible not to want the full game and for years Doom was the world's most installed PC software. The first-person shooter action may look dated now (you can't look up or down and the monsters pixelate badly up

close), but at the time it was nothing less than mind-blowing. While Doom was not the first ever FPS, it was the first to have all the elements right - great level and monster design, fast graphics, tight control and awesome weaponry, including the trusty shotty and of course, the BFG.

There were no cut-scenes but the story was strong. You are a marine transferred to Mars, home of the Union Aerospace Corporation. UAC is carrying out research on inter-dimensional travel on Mars' two moons, Phobos and Deimos, when something goes terribly wrong. Sent to Phobos to sort things out, you find everyone dead and the halls and passageway full of zombies and demons. Time for some carnage.

Doom was the first game to be genuinely scary - even making some people motion sick when playing. And it was also the first game that drove people onto LANs for multiplayer fun. Game players of the world owe Doom a lot.



Doom 3, what a difference ten years makes

id SOFTWARE FPS TIMELINE

The history of id first person shooters is like a history of the genre itself

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1992 Wolfenstein 3D | 1993 Doom | 1994 Doom 2 | 1996 Quake | 1997 Quake 2 | 1999 Quake 3 | 2004 Doom 3 |
|------------------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|

NEXT ISSUE! Project Gotham Racing 2, Grand Turismo 4, Halo 2, 007 Everything or Nothing, Manhunt, Max Payne 2 and much more...

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